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THE CONVERSATIONS in Washington, first between President Roosevelt and Prime Minister MacDonald and then between M. Herriot and the President, are reported in the press in tones of optimism. This is perhaps just as well. The diplomats arriving in the capital are coming for just one purpose: to create an atmosphere of friendly understanding and confidence which may possibly carry the Economic Conference in London over the almost insuperable difficulties that face it. The world clamors for agreements leading to economic security. But such agreements must be made by nations which face one another across chasms of suspicion and conflicting aims. Anything that can be done in advance to bridge these differences increases the hope of a renewal of international trade and industrial activity. We fear, however, that the best efforts of President Roosevelt—despite his frankness and friendliness and his realization of the crucial need of agreement—will be largely wasted upon a Europe in which two systems of opposing alliances are in process of crystallization. How far can good-will and earnest intentions penetrate this European complex? Nations will not lower trade barriers along frontiers that are hedged with guns. The President's valiant efforts will doubtless be seconded by Mr. MacDonald, who, despite his recent rash collaboration with Signor Mussolini, is sincere in his pronouncements in behalf of peace. But the economic aims of these two men and their advisers—the lowering of tariffs, the stabilization of currencies, the standardization of exchanges, the settlement of the war debts—must be thrown into a political whirlpool where they are likely to sink.

THE DETERMINATION of France, Poland, and the three Little Entente countries to permit no revision of the peace treaties and to oppose Mussolini's proposed four-Power European conference was no doubt strengthened by the Nazi performances in Germany. Those five nations are reported to have signed a standpat pact. The whole world was inclining to a sympathetic view of Germany's plight, her reparations had been canceled, and a disposition was growing to attempt to right in a measure the post-war injustices of territorial distribution. Now all this has changed. The Brown Shirts constitute the newest and most serious menace to the peace of Europe, particularly since the German people are now completely insulated against learning the truth not only about their own land, but concerning public opinion abroad. Inculcating the belief that Germany was never defeated on the battlefield, but betrayed by the Socialists behind the lines, Hitler, Goebbels, and Göring are again training the German nation as an army for "the day." The new Nazi songs proclaim the need of shedding French blood. Unless the Nazi dictatorship is overthrown, it seems certain that its mad rulers will bide their time until they feel strong enough to launch an offensive war. In a few weeks Hitler and his cohorts have destroyed the efforts of fifteen years of republicanism, and made it impossible to carry farther the revision begun at Locarno and Lausanne.

WHEN SECRETARY WOODIN announced a complete embargo on gold exports, so taking us officially off the gold standard for the first time since 1878, a large section of British and French comment was resentful. The commentators implied that our action was a deplorable breach of ethics. This seems odd and illogical in view of the fact that the British abandoned the gold standard a year and a half ago and that the French a few years ago redeemed their old currency and old internal bonds at only one-fifth of their face amount, not to speak of their deliberate default in interest to us last December. The commentators, however, hinted that the French and British actions were the result of "economic necessity," while America abandoned the gold standard "voluntarily." It is questionable whether disinterested analysis would establish this difference. A nation that was willing to see all its banks closed before it consented to abandon gold at the old parity can hardly be accused of having abandoned it lightly. The inflation bill sponsored by the Administration contains many permissive provisions that might well give concern, but Secretary Hull's official statement that our monetary action was in no sense intended as a club to be used in international bargaining, and the various statements to the effect that the British and American experts are moving toward a currency agreement, are reassuring.

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CONFIDENCE CAN BE RESTORED by having the leading nations of the world return to the gold standard at the earliest possible moment. But in the interest both of the immediate raising of the price level and of the ability to stay on the gold standard, they must return to gold currencies of a sharply reduced gold content. The French, in the present negotiations, are in a peculiarly embarrassing position for the reason that they are still on the gold basis. They cannot discuss devaluation freely, and feel obliged to assure the world that they contemplate no action whatever. The American and British delegates will be making a serious error if they assume that there is anything to gain from devaluating while leaving France and other countries on the 1929 gold level. Those countries will experience revival much more promptly if we encourage them to devaluate to the same extent as ourselves; their revival will not only make them better customers, and so help our own recovery, but a general devaluation will remove any charges of bad faith or comparative loss of economic prestige as between nations, and will reduce to a minimum violent international shifting of gold.

JAPAN MOVES ON into China, and a new "independent" state, Huapeiku, is born—and all because, regrettably, the Chinese are so little devoted to world peace that they continue to put up a "provocative defense" against Japan's altruistic advances. Huapeiku is at present contained within the triangle bounded by the Great Wall and the Lwan River. But it is likely to grow south and west to Peiping and Tientsin if the Chinese persist in their folly—or even if they don't.

IN GRANTING a writ of habeas corpus freeing George Crawford, a Negro, Judge James A. Lowell of the Federal District Court of Massachusetts has admirably dramatized the important issue raised in the Scottsboro case—the systematic exclusion of Negroes from Southern juries trying Negroes in criminal cases. Crawford's case was fully discussed in Helen Boardman's article The South Goes Legal, in *The Nation* of March 8. He was charged with the murder of Mrs. Agnes Boeing Ilsley, a wealthy member of the Virginia hunting set. A "frame-up" is strongly indicated, designed to shift suspicion from another member of this set. Governor Ely had signed extradition papers, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People sought recourse in habeas corpus. In granting it Judge Lowell speaks with refreshing vigor: "Why send this Negro back to Virginia when I know and everyone knows the Supreme Court will say the trial is illegal? The whole thing is absolutely wrong. It goes against my Yankee common sense to have a case go on trial for two or three years and then have the whole thing thrown out by the Supreme Court. The only persons who would get any good out of it would be the lawyers." And in reply to the question raised by the Massachusetts Assistant Attorney-General, who as the representative of the Governor opposed allowing the writ: "Are we going to say that the State of Virginia does not uphold the laws of the United States?" Judge Lowell said, "They have not done so when it comes to a question of putting Negroes on juries down there. The whole thing to me is a piece of stage play." The incident may serve to illustrate some of the strange complexities of our jurisprudence which are so disturbing to laymen—and some lawyers. Judging from the precedent of Marbles *vs.* Creecy, in 1909, in which Justice Harlan rendered the decision of the full court, it appears likely that the Supreme Court of the United States will overrule Judge Lowell, and, on the assumption that Virginia would give Crawford a fair trial, vacate the habeas corpus. If, however, Virginia then convicts Crawford, with no Negroes on the jury, it seems probable that the Supreme Court will, as Judge Lowell prophesies, throw the whole thing out. If this assumed sequence takes place, it would indeed go against all common sense, Yankee or other.

THE POWER TRUST has lost its first major battle in its campaign to dominate the national economy. It is now about to be driven from its second line of defense. The first battle was fought over water-power sites. If the trust could obtain a monopoly on these, especially the larger ones at Muscle Shoals, Boulder Dam, and so forth, it could create a superpower system covering the entire country. This would give the trust unbounded economic power, for the users of electricity would be, save for the largely impotent regulation of State governments, completely at the mercy of the utility companies. The superpower system would reduce production costs enormously, for obviously it is much cheaper to let nature do the generating than to produce electricity in steam plants. At the same time rates to consumers would remain more or less fixed, State regulation being what it is. Can anyone doubt that with the creation of such a system the trust would continue to pocket its unconscionably huge profits? Happily for the public the trust has lost this first battle. The most important power sites are in the hands of the federal government, though the trust tried desperately to block the Boulder Dam project and sought to capture Muscle Shoals under the pretense of having a private company operate it for the purpose of producing commercial fertilizers. In some of the States, notably Washington, the trust has also been beaten back. Thanks largely to the relentless campaign of Homer T. Bone, now a member of the United States Senate, the State of Washington has reacquired every water-power site within its territory. But the trust was far from defeated. It felt that it could still reach its goal if it could prevent the federal and State governments from distributing the electricity they produced.

THUS BEGAN the second battle, a struggle for control of transmission lines. If the trust owned and controlled the transmission lines, the government would be compelled to sell its electricity to the utility monopoly, for in no other way could the electricity be distributed to the ultimate consumers. Obviously the trust would buy only on its own terms. But if the government owned the lines, or parallel lines, the tables would be turned. The utilities could then buy electricity only on such terms and under such restrictions as the government chose to lay down. If they did not like these terms, the trust could continue to produce its own more expensive power and seek to sell it in competition with the government, which through its control of transmission lines could sell electricity directly to municipalities, cooperative associations, and even to ultimate consumers. Such competition would inevitably ruin the private companies because of the lower generating cost of the government-produced electricity. In the end the trust would have to come to terms with the government. It was because the

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original Norris bill provided for government ownership of transmission lines as well as government operation of the Muscle Shoals plant that Herbert Hoover vetoed it. And it is precisely this provision in the Tennessee Valley bill that is now being so bitterly attacked by the power trust and its allies in Wall Street and in the United States Chamber of Commerce.

THE NORRIS-McSWAIN BILL, sponsored by the Roosevelt Administration, will give the government almost complete control over the power industry in the Southeast. Section 10 authorizes the Tennessee Valley Authority, which would be created under the bill, to sell electricity to "States, counties, municipalities, corporations, partnerships, or individuals," preference being given to the first three and to "cooperative organizations of citizens or farmers, not organized or doing business for profit, but primarily for the purpose of supplying electricity to its own citizens or members." Section 12 would require the Tennessee Valley Authority to refrain from selling electricity to persons or corporations "engaged in the distribution and resale of electricity for profit" unless the buyers specifically agree to resell to the ultimate consumer "at a price that shall not exceed an amount fixed as reasonable, just, and fair by the Federal Power Commission." No greater or more effective authority to regulate the utilities was ever given to a governmental agency. Under the Tennessee Valley Act the government could say to the power trust that it must reform or be smashed. But Sections 10 and 12 would be meaningless and worthless if that part of Section 12 which authorizes the construction of transmission lines by the Tennessee Valley Authority were modified or deleted. If these sections are adopted intact, the power trust will have encountered its first effective check and the electric consumer received his first "break."

MR. ROOSEVELT is astutely varying his political appointments with appointments based on sheer ability and intelligence. The selection of John Dickinson as Assistant Secretary of Commerce is a refreshing example of the second sort. Mr. Dickinson, although only thirty-nine years old, has had an unusually varied experience. He was formerly a member of the Harvard and Princeton faculties, was once associated with William G. McAdoo in the practice of law, and is now professor in the Pennsylvania Law School. He is known primarily as an expert in administrative law, but his knowledge in other fields is wide. His translation of and commentary upon John of Salisbury's "Policraticus"—a medieval treatise on politics—established Mr. Dickinson's reputation as a classicist as well as a student of political theory. His volume on "Administrative Justice and the Supremacy of Law," dedicated to Felix Frankfurter, develops the "newer philosophy of social solidarity" as a basis for legal procedure. Many of his talents can be utilized in his new position. Under the Hoover Administration the Department of Commerce became an abject agent of big business. The appointment of Mr. Dickinson is, we hope, an indication that the new Administration intends to convert this department, under Secretary Roper, into a General Staff which will rally diversified social forces to a concerted offensive against the depression and the major evils of our economic life.

OVER THE COUNTRY resentment is rising like steam from thawing fields. After a long winter of discontent and deep thought, the farmers in State after State are emerging with revolutionary plans that far outrun the Administration's measures. In March the National Farmers' Holiday Association condemned the farm bill as a gesture "worse than silly" and "a deliberate effort to palliate rather than remedy our agricultural ills." The same convention, representing farmers in sixteen States, demanded a national moratorium on foreclosures, federal operation of banks as public utilities, and a steeply graduated federal income, gift, and inheritance tax up to the point of confiscation to prevent the accumulation of private wealth dangerous to society. Finally it was resolved that "unless we receive legislative justice by May 3, 1933, we shall then prepare for a marketing strike within ten days, and a national farmers' holiday will be declared and maintained." The demanded relief has not yet appeared and plans for a nation-wide farm strike covering twenty-five States are going forward. "We're going to have justice if we have to shut off every hog, every kernel of grain, every pint of milk, and every pound of butter." We are quoting Milo Reno, the president of the Holiday Association. And his threat is not an idle one. In New York State one strike and the threat of another on a larger scale forced the establishment of a board to fix the price of milk. In Wisconsin fear of the farmers' strike is so great that Governor Schmedeman, in an attempt to head it off, arbitrarily raised the price of milk for the last two weeks of April. "I am fearful," he said, "of the city unemployed joining the picket lines."

UNREST IN OTHER QUARTERS is indicated in an unprecedented crop of announced marches on Washington. The Continental Congress for Economic Reconstruction, Socialist and liberal in its inception, is scheduled to meet there early in May. Its chairman speaks of action and the spirit of 1776 and proposes a national council of the people "which will exert the pressure of our mass strength to win legislation for the benefit of farmers and workers, both employed and unemployed." The B. E. F., which got tear gas from Hoover and cuts in compensation from Roosevelt, is again mobilizing. The Portland headquarters of the Oregon Veterans' Liaison Committee is organizing the march and mentions 50,000 as the number of veterans who will camp in the capital this summer. It is an exuberant estimate, but even 10,000 might prove embarrassing. More than 145,000 signatures were affixed to a petition issued by the *Amsterdam News*, a Negro newspaper in Harlem, New York City, for a march on Washington in behalf of the nine Scottsboro boys. For this march also the estimates run too high. But if only a few thousand Negroes demanding even justice invaded Pennsylvania Avenue, the parade would be impressive and instructive to those who live and rule on Capitol Hill. Let no one ignore or underestimate the significance of these demonstrations. At present they may be disorganized, badly led, futile; their objectives may be misguided and superficial. But the march is becoming more frequent; it is being employed by three important groups among the economically dispossessed—the farmers, the Negroes, and the unemployed workers—whose demands are becoming more fundamental. The organized march may develop into a successful American technique for direct action.

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# Circuses Without Bread

THE ardor and enthusiasm generated in Mr. Roosevelt's campaign have continued through the two whirlwind months of his Administration. Events have tumbled after one another in such numbers that it seems incredible that less than eight weeks have passed since the first act was staged. The people have been given so many circuses that so far they have hardly noticed the continued absence of bread. First the bank closing; then the emergency banking legislation; then the reopening, amid applause, of some 80 per cent of the banks. (Those that are closed have between five and six billion dollars of the people's money locked inside.) Then, in rapid succession, measures designed to increase the prices of farm products, to secure mortgagees and ease the burdens of their debtors, to institute drastic cuts in government expenses, to put men to work on reforestation jobs, to appropriate federal funds for direct relief and for public projects, to reduce the hours of work, to insure honesty and publicity in marketing securities, to permit embargoes on munitions exports, to develop Muscle Shoals as a public power project; and finally the momentous decision, on the eve of the international economic discussions, to suspend shipments of gold and initiate a policy of inflation. Some of these measures have been made into law under extreme executive pressure; others are still being debated. Many of them give the President or members of his Cabinet executive powers previously unheard of under our Constitution. The dangers inherent in such action have been assumed by the Executive to be less than the dangers threatening the country through long-drawn-out partisan haggling. Without fully acquiescing in this view, we believe that Mr. Roosevelt has had behind him a huge majority of the people, so eager for change that the only method they would not have tolerated was one of delay.

But circuses are easier to provide than bread. To close the banks was merely to prevent something worse—the collapse of the whole banking system; to open the sound banks restored a little confidence but left the people with at least $5,000,000,000 less purchasing power. To balance the budget on paper may have improved government credit, but this credit must be stretched to permit the use of hundreds of millions of dollars in creating jobs and feeding the hungry. To raise prices and stabilize production on the farms through subsidies is probably impossible and would surely prove a grievous burden for the rest of the consuming public to bear. To shorten the working week will lower wages for every worker already employed unless a minimum rate is fixed; while to set a minimum is hopeless as long as 61 per cent of the nation's industry has ceased to show a profit. As for inflation—so variously viewed as a menace or a cure-all—its effect is dependent upon factors far more difficult to gauge even than the possibility of its control. Not the most optimistic advocate of inflation in any of its forms can be certain how far it will raise prices or whether, when prices rise, people will actually buy enough more goods to give enough added employment to put enough extra purchasing power into the pockets of the workers to keep the upward spiral going. It becomes, in fact, a desperate race between decreasing real wages and the movement toward enlarged business activity and increased employment.

Every one of the President's measures faces the fundamental stumbling-block of an economic system that has ceased to function in such a way as to employ the working class and pay profits to the owners. Can this system be patched together, set on its foundations, and made habitable again for both the masters and the help? Already in Mr. Roosevelt's brief period of power he has seen how each proposed economic change has merely created the need for a larger one. A limited farm-allotment plan grows into a general dictatorship over production and marketing and the prices to be paid for agricultural produce. The thirty-hour bill, at first designed simply to reduce hours of labor and so put more men to work, is in process of becoming a vast scheme of government control over hours and wages and production in industry; with prices presumably raised through inflation to meet the increased costs. The embargo on the domestic use of gold led to the embargo on shipments of gold abroad, with international consequences beyond present reckoning.

As they grow and multiply these various schemes are merging into something like an unplanned economic plan. Its shape is not clear and it contains innumerable conflicts and contradictions; but it obviously contemplates regulation by the federal government of a large part of the process of production and distribution. This is evident enough to cause alarm among bankers and associations of business men. They know, or suspect, in what general direction Mr. Roosevelt's unpremeditated steps are carrying us. They are massing to attack the industrial-control bill proposed by Secretary Perkins. The *Business Week* gives warning of the cloud, "no bigger than Miss Perkins's hand, low down on the horizon. . . . What about these new measures of industrial control?" While on the left the radicals in Congress are beginning to agitate for a "right-to-live" amendment to the Constitution. They believe that any measures sufficiently drastic to be effective would be thrown out by the Supreme Court and they want an amendment empowering Congress to enact laws to provide minimum wages and maximum hours for all workers, federal old-age pensions, unemployment and sickness insurance, and regulation of the production of all essential commodities.

The vital questions remain. Can a planned society emerge from under the wing of our Constitution? Can it exist within the shaky framework of the profit system? Can it, in any case, be designed by Franklin Roosevelt whose technique has been likened to that of a quarterback in a football game—ready to shift his play according to the demand of the moment? We doubt it profoundly. The rebuilding of the economic structure is a job to be undertaken knowingly and according to plan. There is reason to believe that at least some important elements in the Administration recognize and are prepared to accept the ultimate social implications of its immediate measures. It should be obvious that the Administration cannot give jobs to workers and food to everyone without assuming a measure of control not contemplated in that "charter of anarchy," our Constitution.

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# Mr. Welles's Opportunity

SUMNER WELLES, detached from the Assistant Secretaryship of State to be Ambassador to Cuba, has an opportunity which rarely comes to a diplomat in these modern days, when envoys plenipotentiary have come to be for the most part mere figureheads. The solution of the difficult and complex problem which now exists in Cuba depends in no small degree on the understanding, wisdom, forcefulness, and tact of the new Ambassador. He must chart his course with an eye to our responsibilities under the Platt Amendment, to the need of restoring in Cuba a government "adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty," and yet be mindful of the sovereignty of C ba and the sensibilities of the Cubans. He must bear in mind the effect of his attitude upon the relations of the United States with all of Latin America. He must have the courage to deal with intrenched interests back home.

Mr. Welles should be well qualified for the task. He has had a long familiarity with Latin American affairs. He knows the Cuban situation intimately. And whereas ten years ago he was an apologist for some of the utterly unjustifiable acts of aggression committed by American imperialism through the instrumentality of the State Department of which he was an integral part, observation of the consequences of our policies has brought him to a maturer and saner judgment.

In Cuba, specifically, the task is the difficult and delicate one of restoring civil liberty and the island's economic fabric without overt intervention. Intervention in the form of the occupation of 1905-9 is wholly unnecessary and should be avoided at all costs. Another proconsulship as practiced by General Crowder in the years following the World War would be only slightly less objectionable. Yet a certain amount of firm guidance and tactful cooperation by the American Ambassador is now—for a time—almost inevitable, and undoubtedly desirable. President Machado requires a more forceful attitude than has been exhibited by the American embassy for the last eight years. And much that the Ambassador may properly and wisely do cannot, at the risk of defeating his very objectives, be formally set down, but falls within the sphere of his own discretion. Elsewhere in this issue we print a clear exposition by Hubert Herring of the present state of affairs in Cuba. The Cubans are united as they have not been since independence in their determination to oust Machado; and certainly it is impossible to visualize any restoration of Cuban liberties or true economic reconstruction without his withdrawal. As *The Nation* pointed out in a recent editorial, Machado's maintenance in office has been due directly to the financial support of great New York banking groups, which has enabled him to keep a well-equipped army. This army has held his bloody dictatorship in the saddle. The sanguinary conflict which Mr. Welles faces is therefore only in secondary degree one between the Cuban people and Machado. It is a conflict between the Cuban people and the very interests in whose behalf the State Department has for the last twelve years been assiduously active in the Caribbean. It has been the State Department which has promoted the interests of the National City and other banks in our neighboring republics, and has stood behind those great aggregations of power and capital whose practices are now so completely discredited. Nevertheless, their power persists. It is not absent in certain branches of the Administration. It persists unbroken in Cuba. Our task therefore becomes the application to another sector of the economic front of what President Roosevelt has defined as "the new terms of the social contract." Mr. Welles has the opportunity of writing a new chapter not merely in our relations with Cuba, but in a more enlightened Latin American policy. To succeed, he must be able to demonstrate a thoroughly unselfish attitude on the part of the United States and a determination to help free Cuba in the spirit in which the American people were enlisted in her behalf in 1898. And today that means economic as well as political self-determination.

# The Munitions Lobby

THE House has passed the resolution authorizing the President to lay down embargoes on shipments of munitions to nations at war or threatening to go to war. The measure is now awaiting action in the Senate, where it will be strongly opposed if not defeated. It will certainly be defeated if the munitions lobby is not checked.

Originally offered by the Hoover Administration, the resolution was approved by the Senate three months ago with votes to spare. It was later called back for reconsideration, but the pro-embargo forces still commanded a comfortable majority. Since then sentiment in favor of the resolution has appreciably diminished. On the surface there appears no good reason for this reversal of sentiment. The resolution is now being sponsored, not by a generally discredited President, but by a Chief Executive who was recently carried into office by a record-breaking landslide and who still enjoys almost unprecedented popular support. His party in the Senate has greatly increased its strength. More than that, the chief opponent of the resolution, Senator Bingham of Connecticut, has in the meantime been retired. Yet the measure has actually lost votes in the Senate. Why?

There can be only one answer. The munitions lobby has been at work. It is an open secret in Washington that the armament manufacturers have approached almost every member of the Senate, and according to an important government official have "reached a number of them." *The Nation* has been informed that at least six Senators who voted for the resolution will now oppose it. Doubtless others have changed their position or are thinking of doing so.

The munitions lobby has long been active. When President Hoover first suggested that he would send an embargo resolution to Congress, the White House and State Department were swamped with protests from airplane manufacturers, munitions-makers, business organizations, rifle clubs, and the like. When President Roosevelt declared that he would seek favorable action, the protests again came pouring into Washington. These protests were for the most part similar in language and form, which betrayed their inspired origin. The munitions-makers did not rest at that. They appeared in person or sent their most dependable representatives to oppose the resolution at the committee hearings.

The munitions lobby has even succeeded in dividing

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the government against itself. While Joseph R. Green, an officer of the Department of State, testified in behalf of the resolution, Luther Becker, chief of the Iron and Steel Division of the Department of Commerce, appeared against it. Why has the munitions lobby gone so long unnoticed and unmolested? Other lobbies have been denounced and occasionally investigated. But the only opportunity the country as a whole has had to observe at close range the methods of the arms manufacturers was during the Shearer investigation. For reasons not yet clear, nothing ever came of that inquiry.

Whether the arms-embargo resolution is defeated or not, the munitions industry should be subjected to an immediate inquiry. In recent months we have been perilously close to another world war. The danger is far from having passed. Only the makers of engines of destruction, of gas bombs and explosives, of bullets and bayonets, would profit by a new war. They have many important financial connections and even more important political connections. Their influence seems to be unbounded. The American armament manufacturers have actually precipitated wars in South America by playing off one unfriendly country against another—the State Department has plenty of documentary evidence of this. The European ring has lately several times come close to precipitating hostilities on the Continent. The American people for the sake of their own security must demand that the political and financial operations of this insidious industry be exposed. Such an investigation would be ineffective if it were confined to a mere routine interrogation of munitions-makers and peace workers. It must go into every phase of the American industry, into the political methods of the manufacturers, their propaganda expenditures, their shipments to the Far East and South America, and their financial and working agreements with the big armaments ring of Europe. We are convinced that the country would be amazed by the facts an honest and exhaustive inquiry of this sort would disclose, and would demand what *The Nation* has long demanded—government ownership of every industry that manufactures war materials.

# Class Justice

THERE are at least two possible ways of looking at the trial and conviction of the engineers in Russia. One of them is to say that Russia is a sovereign state with a perfect right to administer justice in whatever way she sees fit, and this, rather inconsistently perhaps, is the way which many liberals seem to have chosen. The other way is to forget, for the moment at least, that the professed aims of the Soviet government—certainly the economic aims—are aims of which liberals tend to approve, and to consider the trial exactly as one would consider any other trial in which the accused suffered under disadvantages which arose from the social and political prejudices of the court. We are not accustomed to say of the Nazis in Germany, of the Fascists in Italy, or of the one-hundred-percenters in Scottsboro that it is, after all, merely their own affair. We are accustomed to criticize their premises as well as their methods. Why should we not do the same in the case of Russia?

Looked at thus, it is difficult to see how liberals who have always protested against the effect of class prejudice in other famous cases, who have always pretended, at least, that they demanded a rigidly impartial trial, can logically acquiesce in the methods of Russia just because these liberals happen to sympathize somewhat with the basic aspirations of the Russian people. The prosecutor himself boasted that it was not an impartial trial, and declared that the purpose of the court was to administer "class justice." The prisoners were long held incomunicado under conditions which certainly gave ample opportunity for a third degree, and they were allowed no counsel except that which was appointed for them and which, presumably, therefore did not really want them acquitted. They were definitely presumed to be guilty unless proved innocent, and now that they have been sentenced it is impossible to determine from any of the long dispatches of what specific acts they were declared guilty. We shall not stop to remind our readers that one of the outrages of the first Scottsboro trial was the fact that the defendants were represented only by lawyers appointed by the prejudiced court, but we shall point out that the engineers in Russia were apparently convicted for reasons resembling those for which Sacco, Vanzetti, and Tom Mooney were convicted in this country—because, that is to say, the court was convinced that no matter what specific charges could or could not be proved against them they were in general enemies of the social order which the court defended. No one ever denied that either the victims of Massachusetts or the victim of California were guilty of being radicals. Moreover, in the case of Mooney at least, it was pretty generally recognized that he was by no means incapable of employing dynamite. But most of the defenders of all three insisted that the question was not whether the accused were radicals, that it was not even, primarily, a question of whether or not they were guilty of the specific acts charged against them; but that it was, on the contrary, essentially a question of whether or not they had enjoyed the benefits of a fair trial upon the specific charges.

Now we know very well what the reply of the Communist is. An impartial trial and a classless justice is, he says, impossible. He wants quite frankly therefore a justice prejudiced in his favor and an opportunity to prejudge his enemies as he believes that his enemies have always prejudged him. But though that position is perfectly logical it is not the position which the liberal has always maintained, and he is destroying himself if he accepts it, as he has recently shown some disposition to do when his sympathies happen to be engaged. Nor is it sufficient to say that the situation is entirely changed by the fact that the American system pretends to afford an impartial trial while the Russian frankly does not and, unlike the United States, partly recognizes the political nature of the alleged offense. The fact remains that liberals have never said that they demand only that the American government should acknowledge the "unfairness" of its system. They have insisted upon the individual's right to an abstract justice, and they cannot logically change their attitude for Russia without changing it for America also.

The historical position of *The Nation* is the liberal one. It has not changed. We still advocate a classless impartiality. We refuse to be satisfied merely to have prejudice change sides, and to forget all the dangers of a medieval method of trial just because that method happens for the moment to be working in the interests of a revolutionary government whose basic aim is to secure greater economic liberty.

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# Issues and Men

## The Crucial Conferences

I HAVE again spent ten days in the Middle West, in Ohio, Iowa, and Chicago, and I have come back without any encouraging reports. Indeed, in several places I was told that the last three weeks preceding my visit had been the worst yet. In Chicago students and teachers have been striking or protesting publicly against the failure of the city to pay the instructors. The first act of the new mayor was to make possible the sale of tax warrants for $1,700,000 so that the teachers might get one week's pay due last June! In one Iowan town I thought I saw distinct signs of unrest among the young people who are about to leave high school and face the world without the slightest prospect of obtaining jobs. To say that the situation of youth is getting perilous is merely to restate what everybody told me on my travels. Plainly, the relief measures of President Roosevelt have not as yet taken effect; there has not been time.

The more I study the situation, the more convinced I am that our domestic plight can be definitely alleviated only by international action. This makes the conferences in Washington and the final international conference in June—if it is not postponed again—of absolutely vital import if the world is to be saved economically. What a marvelous opportunity confronts Franklin Roosevelt! Surely no man in our history except Woodrow Wilson has had a greater one. It rested in Mr. Wilson's hands whether the world should or should not be made over; whether out of the welter of the war should come a new world order with the nations on equal terms, bound together in peace and amity and by a genuine brotherhood. How Mr. Wilson failed is known of all men; the latest proof of the disaster at Versailles is the four-nation proposal to revise the Treaty of Versailles. Mr. Wilson raised the hopes of the plain people of the world higher than anyone else in modern history; their disillusionment and disappointment flung them back into the depths of hopelessness and despair. Now a second thrilling opportunity presents itself and the question is whether President Roosevelt will be able to rie to this emergency. If he does not, and if the leading nations summoned to the international conference at London cannot agree upon some of the vital remedies, then the world will continue to sink and decay because of the futility and feebleness of its leadership.

What are the chances? Well, as usual, I am hopeful. Mr. Roosevelt is at his best in negotiation, provided that he can resist the temptation to compromise and to be merely pleasant and agreeable. In this respect the President has been a most happy disappointment since he entered the White House. He seems to have cast off the vacillation and uncertainty and reductance to make decisions which so often marked his conduct of the governorship of New York. He has agreed quickly to the proposals laid before him by his intimate advisers, and has then acted quickly. To an extraordinary degree he has realized the worth of the strategy of striking fast. Somewhat similar tactics, it seems to me, are what the world economic situation requires. He must have specific proposals to make and must not be afraid to demand categorical replies. He should then be in a position to get approval from Congress if he needs it, and after the preliminary conferences he should know pretty clearly what the international conference ought to do and how quickly it must do it. Certainly Mr. Roosevelt does not lack arguments for immediate action. He can point to his own country where there is beyond doubt increased confidence, despite the fact that the actual suffering is worse, and a growing hope that the measures already approved will gradually begin to tell. He can point to all that he has achieved at home and especially to the great saving of $144,000,000 which he has asked in the cost of the army—a most admirable move. He ought not to threaten—I despise that strategy which implies that we can obtain disarmament only by having a huge navy or threatening to have the largest in the world, and that we can bring about universal tariff reduction only by threatening to raise our tariffs still higher. The world is too deep in the slough of despond to be moved by threats if it ever could have been. When a statesman begins to threaten, he is usually admitting the weakness of his case.

Mr. Roosevelt has a glorious chance; the world looks to him for leadership. How far he will go and how much he will achieve depends entirely upon the man himself. It will be a greater test by far than anything which has yet come to him—it will be an acid test. As he comes through we shall begin to know how successful his Administration is really going to be and whether the tide will definitely begin to turn next fall. I think the American people realize that he has not been playing politics—barring his, with a few exceptions, wretched diplomatic appointments—and that he is most sincerely endeavoring to serve his fellow-countrymen. Thank heaven, there is not as yet the first sign that he is thinking about renomination and reelection. But the definite place which he will occupy in the hearts of his countrymen and in the history of our time depends in large degree upon the result of the conferences now going on in Washington.

Meanwhile the situation is not without its comic side. Here is the D. A. R. solemnly resolving not to recognize Russia, apparently quite oblivious of the fact that Mr. Roosevelt is filling its sacred Constitution full of holes; his latest request for power to control the currency is a direct violation of that document which declares that Congress alone shall have the power "to coin money and regulate the value thereof."

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When this article reaches my readers, I shall be on the high seas, bound for England, for study and for rest. I shall resume these contributions to *The Nation* on my return home. I should like to take this opportunity to thank the many friends who, by letter or by the spoken word, have encouraged me to believe that they have found this series worth while.

Oswald Garrison Villard

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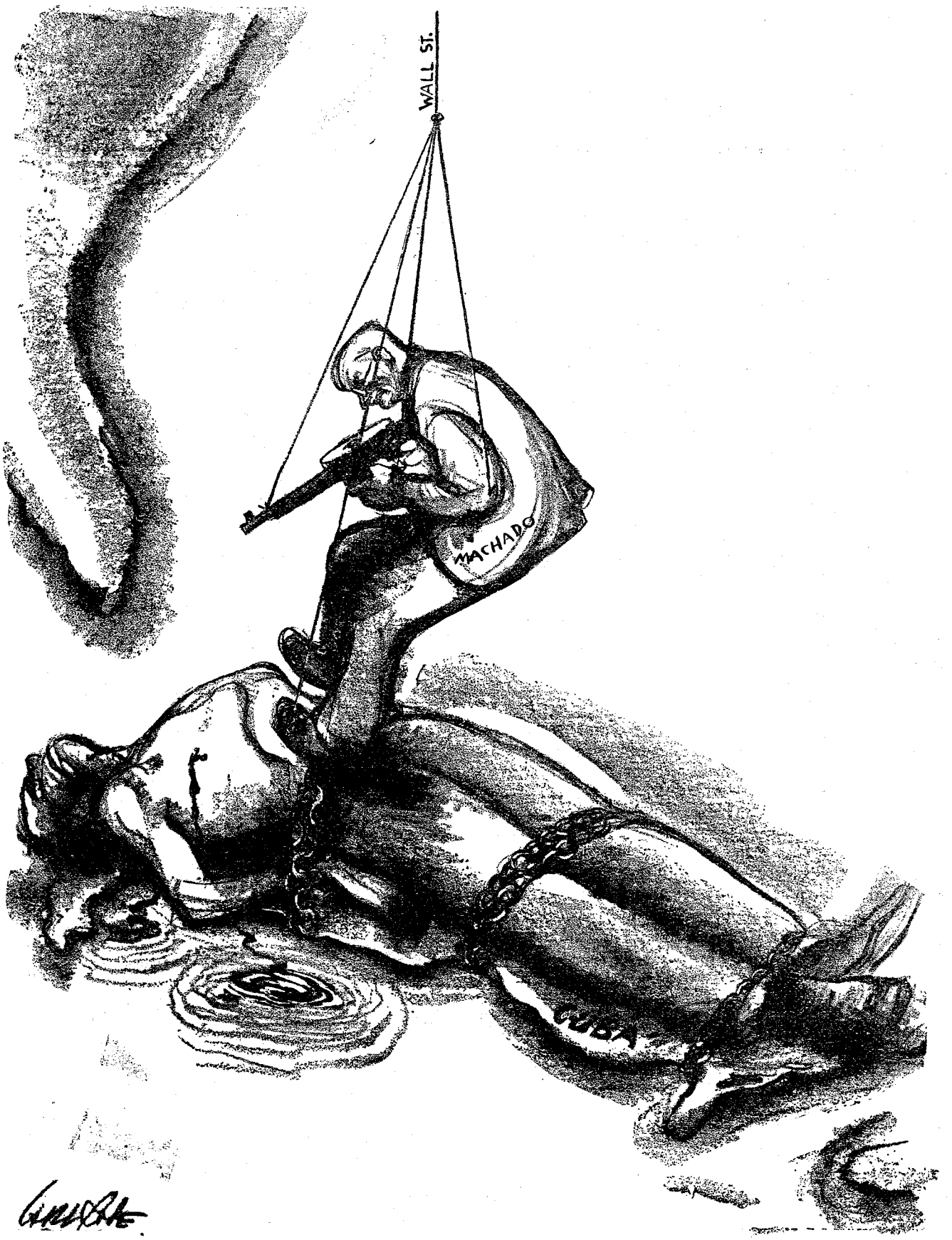


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# Germany's Lowest Depths

By LUDWIG LEWISOHN

*Paris, April 14*

THE German press, including the great democratic dailies, is gagged and throttled. Not only all Jewish journalists, but all Socialists, Republicans, and liberals have been quite simply thrown into the streets. All papers are forced, under pain of immediate confiscation, to roar in unison with the Minister of Propaganda, Dr. Goebbels. The liberal weekly press—*Tagebuch, Weltbühne, Simplicissimus*—is destroyed. Goebbels and his emissaries at this moment roar—they never by any chance merely speak—first, that the Jewish boycott of April 1 was forced upon the innocent German people by the all-Jewish anti-German defamation campaign; secondly, that no revolution in modern times has been as peaceful as this; thirdly, that all law-abiding Jews are safe and unmolested; fourthly, that the Jews must be eliminated from German civilization and if possible from the whole world, at any cost; fifthly, that no one has ever dreamed of denying that at first, yes, at first, "very serious excesses took place [Ausschreitungen sehr ernster Art vorgekommen sind]." (*Frankfurter Zeitung*, April 2.)

Mere atrocity-mongering is of little avail. I shall mention no circumstance that has not been either admitted by the German press or vouched for to me privately by eyewitnesses of unquestionable veracity. If by any conceivable chance the actual physical atrocities have been exaggerated, the men at present in power in Germany have no one but themselves to blame. For no American, however little he may like the Jews, can imagine the pathological bloodthirstiness of the Nazi anti-Semitic campaign that has poisoned the German air these ten years past. The cry "Deutschland erwache!" has been less stentorian than the cry "Juda verrecke!" A foul, sadistic, self-exculpatory myth has been propagated, according to which the pure, innocent, blond, blue-eyed Nordic has been betrayed into defeat and shame by the woolly-haired, uncreative, lecherous Mediterranean spawn, whose treacherous emissary, nursed in the unsuspecting Nordic's bosom, was the German Jew. This myth has been supported by supposedly reputable scholars, so that one cannot open a contemporary reprint of poor old Johann Heinrich Voss's version of Homer without finding out from the introduction that both Achilles and Hector were blond Nordics recently arrived from the Baltic and that Thersites was a woolly-haired Syrian. No wonder that two weeks ago Nazi storm-troopers went up and down the Kurfürstendamm yelling: "Blut muss fliessen!"

The moral tone and flavor of this whole movement is grossly pathological. The Hitler campaign posters, of which photographs are before me, cried: "Zerstampft den Kommunismus!" "Zerschmettert die Sozialdemokratie!" On March 18 Reichsminister Göring said at Stettin: "Not only will Marxism not return; it will be exterminated. These creatures shall feel my fist till they are obliterated. Not only will we stamp out this pest; we will tear the word Marxism out of every book. In fifty years no soul in Germany is even to know what that word means." This is evidently not the language of a sane man. One hears that same tone in the Nazi orders for the boycott of April 1. "Samstag, Schlag zehn Uhr, wird das Judentum wissen, wem es den Kampf angesagt hat!" I quote the original in order that the moral *tone* may be remarked—that tone of barrack-yard vulgarity, of the psychopathic arrogance of the subaltern mind that accepts kicks from above and transmits them to the defenseless below. One is tempted to say that the clinical picture is complete.

Hordes of people in this state of mind are in control of the country. And not only is the excellent Weimar constitution abrogated. All human and civic rights which have been won since the French Revolution have been wiped out. No one, Jew or non-Jew, has any recourse in law against any aggression or any cruelty, against expropriation, imprisonment, or execution. When these two circumstances are put together—the Nazi state of mind and the utter lack of law and order—there is no need to register individual atrocities, whether they have been committed against Socialists, Republicans, or Jews.

The Germans are fond of talking about the *Schmach*, the shameful humiliation to which they have been subjected. They sank to its lowest depth by their own action when on March 29 the Polish Ambassador at Berlin, M. Wysocki, complained at the Auswärtiges Amt, giving harrowing chapter and verse, of outrages committed against Polish nationals of the Jewish faith, and when on April 2 he had occasion to renew his complaint in regard to thirty-two additional atrocities. The vast and cruel irony of these facts is unsurpassable. Nor, by the way, is the German press void of admissions of the most damaging sort, as when on March 29 the *Kölnische Zeitung* indignantly reported that Jewish fugitives in Upper Silesia "boast in an unheard-of manner of their conspicuously bandaged limbs." Equally characterized by an insane humor was the warning of Nazi headquarters to the storm-troopers not to smash the plate-glass windows of Jewish shops, since this practice might involve a loss to non-Jewish insurance companies.

Dreadful as all these things are, they are secondary. I am authentically informed from Germany that the opposition, though for the day and the hour overwhelmed, will surely raise its head again. How overwhelmed it is at this moment may be symbolized by the fact that Gerhart Hauptmann dare not return to Germany and that Thomas Mann and his family have fled to Switzerland. The gigantic atrocity, which is the concern of the whole civilized world, is the elimination of the Jews, irrespective of political affiliation, from the structure of German civilization. I am forced to except Jewish as well as non-Jewish Communists. They must accept a white terror as the fortune of war. I am also forced, as a matter of conscience, to add that Jewish Communists have not been wholly guiltless, however sincere and honorable their conviction, in reducing human society to this level of terrors and proscriptions. But there are at least 500,000 Jews in Germany today, the vast and overwhelming majority, who have no left radical affiliations. These men

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and women have, since the days of Lessing and Moses Mendelssohn, accepted on its face value, as other Jewish groups in other lands have done, the invitation to assimilate, to become Germans not only in act and service but in their hearts and souls. They have succeeded; they have succeeded beyond all measure and out of all proportion. In literature, in art, in scholarship, in law and medicine, in all sciences, and in all intellectual pursuits they have attained a preeminence which none can deny. Nor have they failed to shed their blood, again out of all proportion to their numbers, in the so-called defense of their country from 1813 to the World War. And now they are to be "cleaned out" of German civilization. The *Säuberungs* process is on and it is complete.

Let this be made entirely clear in America: Beginning with Bruno Walter and Heinz Unger of the Berlin Philharmonic, Jews are being expelled from all musical organizations, from the theaters as both directors and actors, from journalism, from the professions of law and medicine and dentistry, from all chambers of commerce and exchanges; all Jewish judges are driven from the bench; all Jewish banks are forced to discharge their Jewish employees; publishers are afraid to publish books by Jews and booksellers to display them; all municipalities have discharged the few remaining Jewish officials, canceled all orders placed with Jewish firms, withdrawn all official notices from newspapers, however heavily censored, wholly or partly under Jewish ownership. Nor let it be forgotten that in Germany as elsewhere Jews were forced into the conspicuous professions of journalism and the theater and music and into the free-lance professions of law and medicine and authorship not least because all the inconspicuous professions—teaching, the consular service, the post office—were mercilessly closed to them. To crown this crowning atrocity of the elimination of Jewish citizens from all honorable and profitable pursuits comes the order, immediately enforcible, of the cancelation of all passports of Jewish persons, so that the few hundred fugitives who have succeeded in crossing the French and Belgian, the Dutch and Danish frontiers have been able to do so only because in these neighboring countries a sense of humanity has been aroused.

Let me dwell on this matter of the cancelation of passports. It gives the lie to the National Socialist folk-mysticism on its own ground. Were these men sincere in their declarations that Jewish influence has poisoned their cultural atmosphere and that the Jewish spirit, however Germanized, can never be other than alien and destructive to them, they would have offered a passport and transportation to every Jew; they would have asked the British Colonial Office for unlimited certificates of entry into Palestine; they would have provided cheap passage on German ships to Jaffa and to Barcelona. Instead, they closed the frontiers and so damned themselves irrevocably in the eyes of any decent human being, be he friend or foe of the Jewish people as such. The Nazis are not even folk-mystics; they are sadists; they are a crew of half-crazed criminals who must be curbed if civilization is anywhere to endure.

I come to the German Jews themselves. They present a sorry spectacle. The public declarations and appeals of the Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden, the Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten, and the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens are of an inconceivable abjectness of spirit. If it were not for the stern and dignified silence—more I dare not write today—of the Zionist and orthodox groups, I should utterly despair. The terrible Centralverein whines: "With dignity and courage we shall know how to bear upon the soil of our homeland the measures inflicted by Germans upon Germans." If these people had had any dignity or courage, if they had ever permitted themselves to face the music of reality, there would have been Jewish gymnasiums, a Jewish university, the formation of a Jewish party at least, as in Czecho-Slovakia, and tireless appeals in Geneva for minority rights and protection these ten last bitter and unspeakably humiliating years. *They* of the Jewish faith? They are not even that. They have not protested against the brutal forbidding of *Shechitah* everywhere. They whine that they are Germans, Germans. Their ancestors went forth in other ages like men and heroes and died with the *Shmah Israel* on their lips. Can there be any gallant-hearted Gentile in the United States who does not take my point?

Of course the situation is one unparalleled in history. Quite strictly and exactly that. All previous major persecutions of the Jews, from the Middle Ages on through the pogrom waves in Czarist Russia after the Russo-Japanese War, were persecutions of a people of strong spiritual and social solidarity—persecutions, that is, of a self-conscious group who were able singly and as a group to resist and survive persecution by means of the moral power of their historic and religious consciousness. This German persecution is the first major persecution in which the persecuted have sold out spiritually to their oppressors at the latter's invitation and command. They have eviscerated themselves; they have for generations extruded from their consciousness all Jewish content and from their political and moral lives all Jewish bindings. They are in fact today as Germanized as it is possible for them to be and have nothing within them wherewith to bear their Jewish fate. Can anyone conceive of a more cruel confusion or of a more hideous dilemma? Eight years ago, in "Israel," I warned the Jewish people against this unspeakable fate; six years ago Arnold Zweig analyzed the situation and pleaded for Jewish spiritual and cultural auto-emancipation in his great treatise "Caliban." But no one saw fit to heed us.

Group psychology is ill understood. But so much seems to be certain: hatred and aggressiveness are primary factors, quite independent of the realities which are subsequently chosen as the objects of hatred and aggressiveness. The choice throughout the ages of the Jewish people as object and scapegoat is due to legendary ancestral memories of the nations constantly reevoked by the presence, the recognizable difference from themselves, and the defenselessness of the Jewish people. Yet, as these horrors in Germany show, the attempt to obliterate the difference is but to render the aggressor fiercer and the persecuted more defenseless. There is no faintest hope except in auto-emancipation. On April 1, the day of the boycott, little Jewish children were driven out from the schools. Which is more terrifying as a moral phenomenon—the brutality of those who drove the children out or the abjectness of Jewish parents who on that day, a *Shabbath*, permitted their children to go to school? Lest this poison corrupt the world—for it corrupts both master and slave—let Americans no more demand spiritual assimilation but respect their Jewish friends in the measure in which they are themselves, in which they are Jews.

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# The Dollar Adrift

By HENRY HAZLITT

WHEN Secretary Woodin announced an embargo on gold exports on April 19, he took a step of foremost importance for the world. America's abandonment of the gold standard, which occurred as a practical fact on March 4, became official; and when Europe knew that it could no longer get gold from us, the dollar went at once to a discount of 11½ per cent on the foreign-exchange markets. The step was followed immediately by a compensating rise in the "international" commodities—wheat, cotton, copper, silver, wool, raw hides, silk, coffee, cocoa—and the contagion spread immediately to farm products with an almost wholly domestic market, and to the stock market. "Inflation" was under way.

There is a widespread opinion that if you decide to have inflation it is a matter of relative indifference what kind you adopt. No opinion could be more profoundly mistaken, or more dangerous. It is like believing that if you decide to remove the patient's appendix it is of little importance whether the operation is done by a skilful surgeon or by a butcher with a dirty knife. The difference between intelligent and unintelligent inflation is the difference between prompt recovery and a series of dangerous complications which may ultimately result in complete disaster.

The soundest and most desirable of all steps at the present juncture would be the definite reduction in the gold content of the dollar. This reduction should be not less than about one-third and not more than one-half. At all costs we must avoid an insane international competition in debasement. Every effort should be made to agree to a uniform devaluation with sterling and as many other currencies as possible. The only exceptions permitted to this—and these should even be encouraged—would be those necessary to bring the principal world currencies into even relationship with each other. It is senseless, for example, that the problems of exporters, importers, and tourists should be complicated by a par relationship of sterling and the dollar of $4.8665 when it could so easily, after joint devaluation, be made $4 or $5. This agreement should be reached at the World Economic Conference, and discussion toward that end should begin immediately. At the same time that the level is fixed upon, a definite date—preferably not more than a year hence—should be set for the resumption of gold payments at the new level. It is imperative that the world return to stability and certainty at the earliest moment.

Before discussing the consequences of this program we may point to the consequences of the principal alternatives to it. The Administration's actual policy has not yet been clarified, but each of the following alternatives is permitted by the new inflation bill: (1) efforts to return to the old gold parity of the dollar while attempting to inflate by forcing bank-credit expansion; (2) government overspending financed directly or ultimately by fiat money; (3) silver monetization, or bimetallism; (4) drifting.

The first alternative represents the policy the Federal Reserve authorities have followed ever since the beginning of the crash. Its complete futility ought by this time to be obvious. More than a year ago, in advocating devaluation, I commented upon this policy as follows:

> Devaluation is a drastic remedy, but let us not deceive ourselves into supposing that we can achieve real results with less drastic means. We cannot do so with mere "credit inflation." The volume of credit, in general, follows rather than precedes changes in the commodity price level; the belief that the causation is the other way round is a widespread but profound fallacy, and policies based on that fallacy will prove worse than futile. One need merely point to the Federal Reserve banks, which have been trying to stem the tide by keeping money artificially cheap and loading up with government securities—and the only result is, that they are loaded up with government securities.

It is to be strongly hoped that the new Administration does not continue or resume this policy. The Federal Reserve banks can make money artificially cheap (their success in doing so from 1927 to 1929 was one of the major causes of the collapse), they can conduct open market operations and force an enlargement of the member banks' excess reserves—but they cannot, in depressed times, force those member banks to lend. The reason for this failure is doublesided. On the one hand, the bankers, who have had their fingers burned, do not want to lend money to business, no matter what their own excess reserves, unless they feel pretty strongly assured that they will get it back. On the other hand, manufacturers find no reason to ask for new loans when they have no orders to fill. Bank credit simply cannot be forced into existence in this direct way. And even if it could, it would have very little effect on commodity prices (as contrasted with real-estate and security prices) so long as we attempted to keep the dollar at the old gold parity. Commodity prices under the gold standard are anchored to the world value of gold. The comparative irrelevance of the volume of bank credit outstanding in any one country to prices in that country can be gathered by a mere glance at the striking similarity in the movement of prices in gold-standard countries since 1926. The following are the percentages which price levels in February of this year in various countries bore to price levels in those same countries in 1926: United States 59.8; Austria, 64.5; France, 70.3; Germany, 68.0; Italy, 62.7. This similarity is all the more striking when one recalls that the various "index numbers" are differently compiled and give different weights to various commodities.

President Roosevelt is reported to be sympathetic to gold devaluation, but to believe that something like the same result could be achieved by keeping the present gold content of the dollar and cutting in half the required legal amount of gold reserves. The second may seem superficially the more conservative step, but it would actually be an extremely dangerous one. It would not at all help to increase the volume of credit—for the reason we have just indicated—in depressed times; but it would lead to credit overexpansion in boom times and end in ultimate collapse.

The next possibility under the new inflation bill to be

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considered is that of government overspending financed either by the simple printing of more money by the government or, what amounts to nearly the same thing, the issuance of bonds which are not sold to the public but dumped on the Federal Reserve banks, which in turn issue currency against them. Fortunately the President seems to have set his face against this sort of inflation. It is the most disastrous form possible. It is uncontrollable. The lack of control is twofold: (1) When new expenditures are being paid for with paper money issued as fast as needed, the cost of them does not appear to be coming out of anybody's pocket, and the legislative body sees no reason to confine itself to necessary expenditures; it becomes wilfully extravagant on the assumption that the more it appropriates the more it increases "purchasing power." (2) Although a widespread notion persists to the contrary, even among professional writers on currency, it is not true that the value of a given unit of the currency varies in exact inverse ratio to the quantity of currency outstanding (even allowing for volume of bank credit and "velocity of circulation"). The value of a paper currency depends upon its prospects of ultimate redemption. Almost invariably, and always after the first stages, it drops in value faster than it increases in quantity. In post-war Central Europe, in a frantic effort to offset this tendency, currency was issued with geometrical acceleration. In Germany, for example, the total currency at the end of 1919 stood at 41 billion marks, equal in value to 11 billion gold marks. Even before the end of 1923 the total issue had reached the fantastic figure of 74,954,803,000 billion marks, but all this was worth only one-fifteenth of the total value of the currency at the end of 1919.

Silver monetization, or bimetallism, has many serious drawbacks, and presents no advantage that could not be achieved with much greater simplicity and certainty by the reduction in the gold content of the dollar. The so-called bimetallic standard, so nearly approved by the Senate recently, would in effect mean an alternating standard, and probably a silver standard, particularly if any such preposterous fixed mint-value ratio to gold as 16 to 1 were adopted. If there were no increase in the market price of silver, such a ratio would debase the dollar to about one-fourth of its present value. The increased demand for silver for monetary purposes would of course greatly increase its value and make the debasement less than this; but it would be impossible to know in advance just what the new value of the dollar would be. If the United States were to adopt a bimetallic or silver standard acting alone, as the Senate amendment proposed, our exchange rate would fluctuate daily in terms of all gold-standard currencies, which would put a heavy handicap on our foreign trade. As for the universal adoption of a silver standard, of bimetallism, or of symmetallism, there is simply no good reason for it. Apart from the question of the relative instability of silver's value compared with that of gold, silver is also at present, value for value, about sixty times as bulky as gold. It is hardly necessary to point out how this fact would add to the inconvenience of bank-vault storage or of metallic shipments in settlement of international balances. No one would gain by the adoption of bimetallism, or by the purchase of more silver for the currency, but the silver-mining interests. The provision permitting the President to accept $100,000,000 in silver in payment of foreign debts is a silly one. If the silver is accepted at market value, foreign governments would have to build up the credits to buy the silver when they might much more easily transfer those credits to us directly. If the silver is accepted at more than its market value, that is merely a way of reducing the amount of the debt, and it would be simpler to do this directly also.

We come, finally, to the policy of mere drift. This, combined with minor exchange control, is the policy that Great Britain has been following ever since her abandonment of the gold standard in September, 1931, and it is one we seem very likely to adopt. It is the policy merely of announcing no intentions, but of allowing the currency to become the football of international speculators and then waiting to "see where it settles." But it is quite meaningless to talk of the "intrinsic" or "natural" level of a currency that has ceased to be convertible into gold. Its value varies merely with its prospects of ultimate redemption. In Great Britain we already have the amazing spectacle of market operators fixing the exchange value of sterling from day to day in accordance with its varying prospects of final redemption at one level or another, while the Treasury authorities wait to see what value the speculators will fix so they will know at what level to devaluate! The effects of this are obvious. The rise of prices that followed Great Britain's abandonment of gold came to an end in a few months, after which a decline set in. That is likely to be the course of events here unless we act promptly and decisively. There can be no vigorous recovery of prices, there can be no confident resumption of business activity, there can be no assurance in foreign trade, until the business community knows at what level the currency will be stabilized.

The present writer presented the case for the devaluation of the dollar in the March 30 and April 6 issues of *The Nation* last year. There is not space to repeat the arguments here. Two points, however, may be emphasized. Some critics of devaluation seem to imagine that reducing the gold content of the dollar would benefit only the holders of gold itself. These critics have simply forgotten—if they ever took the trouble to ask—what the gold standard means. It means that currency is freely convertible at any time into its face value in the physical metal gold. So long as that condition exists, a price in any gold-standard country must express at bottom the relation between the value of the commodity priced and the value of a given weight of gold. If this weight of gold is cut in half, the price of commodities, other conditions being equal, will approximately double. The creation of the necessary bank credit to finance this higher price level follows automatically: manufacturers need to borrow more, and bankers are perfectly willing to lend more.

It must never be forgotten, finally, that the true purpose of devaluation is to restore equilibrium within the internal price structure, not any supposed competitive advantages in foreign trade. Notwithstanding such disingenuous articles as those printed in the *Saturday Evening Post* by Garet Garrett and others, all the figures of actual trade show that the alleged advantages of depreciated currencies in foreign trade are mythical. But even if they were not, a competitive race among the nations to out-devaluate each other could end only in calamity for all of them. Devaluation, to have its full effect on confidence, must be reached by international agreement. This, with the drastic reduction of tariff barriers, has become the chief task of the coming world conference.

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# Hitler Over Europe

By ROBERT DELL

*Geneva, April 6*

RAMSAY MACDONALD on March 16 presented the British draft convention to the General Commission of the Disarmament Conference in a speech the tone of which suggested that he regarded himself as a new Moses descended from Mount Sinai to rebuke the faithless tribes of Israel. He then went off to Rome, where Mussolini sprang on him the project of a pact of the four great Western European Powers for the purpose of dominating Europe, rearming Germany, and revising the peace treaties. On March 23 MacDonald reported on his visit to Rome to the House of Commons and declared that if any of the four Powers concerned rejected Mussolini's project that Power would incur immeasurable responsibility for what might follow. The speech increased the alarm that Mussolini's project had excited among the delegations of the European countries at Geneva, except the Germans and the Italians, and the effect on the atmosphere of the Disarmament Conference was so disastrous that after a general discussion of three days on the British draft convention it was generally agreed that it would be useless to proceed at once to a detailed discussion. So on March 27 the conference adjourned until April 25, after deciding to begin on that date the detailed discussion of the plan chapter by chapter and article by article.

Whether the atmosphere will be any better when the Disarmament Conference meets again may well be doubted. Draft convention, Four-Power Pact, and everything else have been overshadowed by the Nazi terror in Germany, which is unique of its kind in modern times and takes us back to the Middle Ages, if not still farther. The reaction to it has been immediate and almost universal. Never in my lifetime have I seen such a current of opinion sweep so rapidly over Europe. The whole of Europe, with few exceptions, has suddenly become anti-German and nowhere is the change more marked than in England, where opinion has for a long time been predominantly and unreasonably anti-French. There have been pogroms, massacres, and cruelties of all sorts within living memory, but never in modern times has the government of a great country declared its intention of outlawing all its Jewish nationals and depriving them not only of the rights of citizenship but also of the means of subsistence.

Horrible as has been the treatment of individual Jews, Socialists, Communists, and even men like Baron von Schönaich whose only crime is that of being opposed to war, there have been more sanguinary revolutions than this in modern times, but never has there been one so contemptibly mean. And the Nazis are not even consistent in their meanness. Herr Kastl has been called upon to resign his position on the executive committee of the German Federation of Industries because he signed the Young Plan, whereas Dr. Schacht, who signed it before him, has been appointed governor of the Reichsbank. I saw a great deal of Herr Kastl during the meeting of the committee of experts for the Young Plan in Paris in 1929 and have since seen him more than once at Geneva. He was erroneously reported to be a Jew, probably because he is a man of remarkably quick intelligence. He is, by the way, a member of the German Nationalist Party, which is represented in the German government, but that fact did not save him.

The reason why what is happening in Germany has been so great a shock to European opinion is that people feel that we have here in the middle of Europe, in what we believed to be a great civilized country, an outbreak of primitive barbarism unchecked by any of the restraints by which the conduct of civilized people is regulated, with which it is useless to reason, and which cannot even be judged by ordinary moral and intellectual standards. The most charitable explanation is that half the German people have gone mad. One characteristic that makes the German Terror unique is that it is completely inexcusable and gratuitous. All other Terrors have at least had the excuse, as in the cases of the French Revolution in the eighteenth century and the Russian Revolution in the twentieth, that the regime had to defend itself against external attacks and internal resistance. In Germany there have been no external attacks and no general resistance. Indeed, the absence of any internal resistance—the ignominious surrender of Socialists, Communists, liberals, Jews, and Catholics—has perhaps done more irreparable harm to the reputation of Germany than the Terror itself. The leading Jewish organization in Germany has denied the reports that the Jews were being ill-treated, and emissaries from the German Socialist Party and the German trade unions have gone to London and Paris respectively to ask their fellow-Socialists and fellow-trade unionists to abstain from attacking the Hitlerite regime.

How is it possible in such conditions as these seriously to discuss draft disarmament conventions or peace pacts? What possible value could be attached by anybody to Hitler's signature to any convention or pact? The man is clearly a criminal lunatic. Even in Italy, as I discovered when I was there recently during and after MacDonald's visit to Rome, there is great uneasiness about Hitler's proceedings since he came into power, and his persecution of the Jews is considered to be crazy. The uneasiness was very evident in a leader a few days ago in the *Giornale d'Italia*. Probably one of the reasons why Mussolini proposed his Four-Power Pact was that he did not relish the idea of being isolated in the company of so disconcerting a partner as Hitler. The pact, in its original form at any rate, is already dead. Even the British government seems to have discovered that MacDonald had been hoodwinked by Mussolini and has proposed important modifications in the original proposal.

The British draft convention is principally one for the rearmament of Germany, which is one of the main objects of Mussolini's proposed pact. It is to be hoped that there will be a change in British policy, which has hitherto shown a deplorable lack of any sense of realities. The fatuous idea of the British government and the British Foreign Office is that by making concessions to Germany they will fortify the position of Baron von Neurath, the German Foreign Minister, and thus enable him to keep Hitler in check. The truth is that Neurath has been retained up to now only for the pur-

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pose of gulling foreign opinion and will probably disappear very soon. He has already been put under the supervision of Rosenberg, whose name by the way does not suggest a pure "Aryan" origin. Concessions to Hitlerite Germany will fortify Hitler's position by enabling him to boast that he has obtained what was refused to Brüning, Stresemann, and German governments of the left. They will be a triumph and a justification of methods of violence but they will fail in their object, for the more Hitler gets, the more he will want. The experience of the last three years ought to be enough. At the end of June, 1930, the Rhineland was evacuated and less than three months later the Hitlerites polled nearly 7,000,000 votes. Last July reparations were abolished and in November the Hitlerite poll was nearly 12,000,000. Last December Germany was granted "equality of rights" and in March the Hitlerite poll increased to more than 17,000,000. The reply to all these concessions is the German Terror. If the process continues, it may stop when Germany has been given Alsace-Lorraine, but hardly before. To allow the rearmament of Hitlerite Germany even to the smallest extent would be a treason to European civilization. It may still be possible to take a step toward equality of rights by the reduction of the armaments of other Powers, but only on one condition, namely, that the British government is prepared to join in any action that may be necessary to prevent Germany from rearming.

# Public Futility Regulation

By E. MICHAEL WHITE

THE ability of the public-utilities monopoly to keep rates up to the 1929 level has been one of the bright spots in the depression—that is, bright for the companies. It is a major problem for the consumer with a reduced income. In the three and a half years since November, 1929, all other prices have dropped with unbelievable rapidity to unbelievably low levels. This drop in prices has been accompanied by reduced incomes. Why have utility rates escaped the deflationary process? The answer is that the purchaser of a competitive product or service is at the mercy of the law of supply and demand and the vagaries of a competitive market, while the purchaser of gas, electricity, and telephone service is "protected" by public-utility regulation. This regulation, which preserved utility properties from confiscation, so-called, in periods of rising prices, has utterly failed to protect the consumer in a period of falling prices. The facts tell the story.

In September, 1929, the food bill for a typical workingman's family in New York City was $381.58 per year. In February, 1933, the bill had been reduced to $212.65, a drop of 44 per cent. In September, 1929, the same family paid $97.80 annually for three necessary services furnished him by the great utility companies. He paid $4 a month for his telephone, for which the New York Telephone Company allowed him sixty-six calls, $2.30 to the Consolidated Gas Company for 2,000 cubic feet of gas, and $1.85 to the New York Edison Company, a subsidiary of the same Consolidated Gas Company, for twenty-five kilowatt hours of electricity per month. In February, 1933, he paid $4.25 for the telephone, $2.30 for the gas, and $2.30 for the electricity, a total for the year of $106.20. In other words, his annual bill for the three services increased $8.40, or 8 per cent. During the same period factory employment decreased 44 per cent in New York State, and factory pay rolls dropped 60 per cent.

The electric bill of the average domestic consumer in the nation increased from $31.65 in 1929 to $33.64 in 1931. To be sure, he got more current for his money, owing to a decrease in the rate per kilowatt hour throughout the nation of approximately 7 per cent. During the same period, however, his income dropped approximately 45 per cent, and a larger share of that reduced income went to pay what the economists call "rigid" utility prices. In addition to causing hardship for the individual consumer, the increasingly large share of our national income which is required to pay these "rigid" prices is a major barrier to economic recovery.

Now let us look at the dividend record of the utility companies during the depression. In New York State total dividend payments to gas and electric companies increased from $72,020,334 in 1929 to $89,806,855 in 1931. This was in addition to increases in surplus. The companies serving New York City, most of which are owned by the Consolidated Gas Company, increased their accumulated surpluses during this period from $223,458,282 to $251,809,399. In 1932 Brooklyn Edison, in addition to paying 8 per cent on its overcapitalized common stock, *increased its surplus by almost three million dollars.* (That surplus had increased 250 per cent in the past five years.) The theory of a surplus is that it is built up in the fat years to provide for the lean.

The rate of return on the book value of common stock of the New York utilities ranged from 8 per cent in the case of Brooklyn Edison to 25 per cent for the Syracuse Lighting Company, 41 per cent for the New York Light and Power Company, and 60 per cent for the Long Island Lighting Company. The 1931 dividend record was maintained in practically all instances in the low-water year of 1932. One notable exception was the New York Edison Company, which was forced to reduce its dividend rate from 12 to 10 per cent! However, Consolidated Gas, the holding company to which the dividend was paid, declared the usual fifty-six-million-dollar dividend, which is at the rate of 11.7 per cent on its common.

How about rates in New York City, where we are supposed to have one of the most enlightened and alert public-service commissions in the country? Milo R. Maltbie, the new chairman of that commission, in a letter to the New York electric companies in July, 1930, made an eloquent plea for lower rates. He wrote:

> The trend of electric rates has been generally downward, and *New York City should lead the procession.* A number of other cities have lower rates than New York City, and with the exception of areas having cheap hydro-electric power, New York companies ought to be in a position to serve their consumers at as low rates as any metropolitan center. A factor in the approval of mergers and

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consolidations permitted by this commission has been the economies which could and should be effected, and you have freely conceded that consumers should share in the economies.

Does New York "lead the procession"? The following table of annual electric bills of customers using fifty kilowatt hours of current per month—the average for the country—demonstrates that the only procession which New York City leads is the procession of exploited consumers:

| | *Annual bill* |
|---|---|
| New York City | $36.60 |
| Average for the country | 34.88 |
| *Publicly owned plants* | |
| Cleveland, Ohio | 18.00 |
| Los Angeles, California | 24.60 |
| Kansas City, Kansas | 21.60 |
| Seattle, Washington | 28.80 |

It is true that there have been tremendous economies in the producing of electricity in New York City as a result of mergers and advances in the industry, but these economies have not been passed on to the consumer. Between 1920 and 1930 the four subsidiaries of Consolidated Gas furnishing New York City with electricity enjoyed operating economies of at least $14,000,000. (These figures do not take into account the tremendous savings due to lower prices since that date.) The extra profit made possible by these economies was paid to the holding company in the form of dividends on common stock. Consolidated Gas raised capital necessary to expand its plant during these ten years by the sale of 5½ per cent preferred stock to the general public. It used this money to buy the common stock of its subsidiaries, on which it receives a return of from 8 to 16 per cent today—annual differential, $13,571,379. While the economies were taking place, the four electric companies increased their surplus by an average of $9,360,000 a year.

One further fact and the picture is complete. That is the fact of monopoly. Five great banker-industrial groups control from 85 to 95 per cent of the electric light and power industry of the nation. The electric and gas industry in New York State is dominated by three great holding companies—the Associated Gas and Electric Company, the Niagara-Hudson Power Company, and the Consolidated Gas Company. The last two companies, controlled by J. P. Morgan and Company, supply over 80 per cent of the gas and electric consumers of the State.

In 1929 the Legislature of the State of New York created a commission to investigate the system of regulation in the State. That commission, composed of the outstanding utility experts of the country, reported as follows:

> Effective regulation along the lines originally intended by the act [the public-service commissions law] has broken down and the consumer has been left to the exploitation of the monopolistic private companies which control the public services.

The commission stated that Manhattan homes, for example, could get their electricity for a maximum of five cents per kilowatt hour if they were charged in accordance with the cost of serving them. That estimate was based on peak 1929 prices. But in 1933, when prices are at the bottom of the trough, the average consumer pays six cents per kilowatt hour and the small user pays an average of seven cents per kilowatt hour. Consolidated Gas, which was overcapitalized $150,000,000, had from 1921 to 1928, by means of a coal surcharge fraud, collected $20,000,000 more than the increased cost of coal warranted. While the consumer was being defrauded, Consolidated Gas absorbed Brooklyn Edison, and the concrete result of that merger was an increase in cash dividends of $18,000,000.

At the conclusion of its investigation, the legislative commission had this to say about the Public Service Commission:

> The Public Service Commission, as the evidence shows, has felt willing or obliged to sanction rates which cannot possibly be justified on any economically sound basis of control. It has tended to dodge every vital issue of a controversial character because of its fear of court reversal, and has in effect surrendered to the utility companies the right to charge whatever rates the conditions of their business and the monopoly character of their enterprise will support.

If that was true in 1929, what words in the vocabulary of respectable men can describe the situation in 1933, when the plight of the consumer has reached a new low? Following the report of that commission, Milo R. Maltbie, long an outstanding figure in public-utility regulation, was appointed chairman of the commission, to replace Mr. Prendergast, who took a $50,000-a-year job with the E. L. Phillips interests, whose companies he had been regulating ineffectually. Under the leadership of Mr. Maltbie the New York Public Service Commission has attempted to reduce rates by a policy of negotiation. This new policy was a result of the difficulties inherent in a system of regulation. In a decision involving electric rates in New York City in 1931, Mr. Maltbie sought to justify a reduction of $5,500,000 which he had negotiated, in place of reductions of from $15,000,000 to $20,000,000 which the consumers demanded, on the ground that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." He pointed out, quite ably, the numerous obstacles to regulation—the time and expense involved, the uncertainty of the outcome due to the confused state of the law, the large number of companies under the jurisdiction of the commission (over 1,000) for whose regulation the commission has a limited staff, and the lack of a scientific basis for fixing rates. He referred to the New York Telephone case, which is a classic example of the wastefulness and inefficiency of the present system of regulation. That case was started in 1920 and is now on appeal to the Supreme Court. It required the taking of 62,864 pages of testimony and 4,232 exhibits, and cost $10,000,000.

Mr. Maltbie went on to say that if the reductions offered by the companies in that case were not accepted, they would be withdrawn and the commission would be forced to resort to rate hearings, with all their delay and uncertainty. What a position for the public! If it does not want to accept reductions offered by the companies, it can take its chances with the courts and a commission whose chairman is pessimistic about the outcome of a rate case. Here is a frank admission that the commission cannot regulate, that it can only "force" reductions which are consented to by the companies. This hat-in-hand policy means a surrender to the very monopolies which public-service commissions were created to regulate. It is such abrogation of control which was criticized by the legislative commission in 1929.

In its annual report of 1932 the New York Public Service Commission defended its policy of negotiation, stating

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that "the policy of obtaining reductions in rates by negotiation rather than by formal cases has been justified again by the results obtained in 1932." What were the results? Reductions in 1932 resulting from both negotiations and rate cases in 1931 amounted to $1,884,200. Reductions negotiated in 1931 are supposed to save the consumers another $8,200,000 annually. Most of this last amount is accounted for by the reduction in electric rates in New York City, which resulted in an increased bill for 50 per cent of the customers, the small users who are least able to bear the increase. The total reduction is less than 2 per cent of the revenues of the companies involved. A reduction in the dividend rate of gas and electric companies to 6 per cent would have meant an annual saving of $40,000,000. Such a reduction of the dividend rate of the New York Telephone Company alone would have meant a saving of $7,500,000 per annum.

During the war and after, many utilities, faced with ruin because of the sudden increase in labor and commodity prices, sought immediate relief—without the formality of rate cases and valuations upon which they now insist. They got it. Rate increases were allowed throughout the country on very limited showings by utility companies, and courts uniformly sustained these emergency measures. It was during this very crisis that Section 72 of the New York Public Service Commissions law was amended, giving the commission the power to fix temporary rates; and the New York Commission has stated recently in several cases that it can fix temporary rates without the necessity of a complete valuation of all company properties.

The Wisconsin Public Service Commission has recently attempted to give the public the benefit of immediate and drastic reductions. In January, 1932, it cut telephone rates 12½ per cent, thereby reducing the dividend rate of the Wisconsin Telephone Company to 6 per cent. The reduction had been preceded by an investigation of eleven months. It was set aside by a federal court after a three-hour argument, between trains. The federal court was recently reversed by the Supreme Court on procedural grounds and the case was sent back for reconsideration. The Wisconsin Commission does not know today whether its decision will be upheld by the Supreme Court.

There is only one sure relief for the apparently helpless consumer. That is public ownership. The figures contained in the table quoted above are more eloquent than argument. Even the threat of public ownership would force the companies to see the light, but in New York State we are denied that weapon. The public-operation bill annually introduced into the New York State legislature, giving cities the power to operate their own utility plants, was defeated again this year. The representatives of the utility companies argued to the legislative committee that to allow cities to go into the business of producing gas and electricity would lead to "racketeering" and "extortion"! The politicians of New York City who recently appropriated $50,000 in order to force rate reductions were noticeable by their absence from the hearing on the public-operation bill, which the *Democratic* Senate failed to pass.

(*This is the second of a series of articles on electric power and the consumer. The third will appear next week.*)

# Machado Must Go

By HUBERT HERRING

*Miami, April 24*

ALL is well with Cuba. I have it from none other than President Gerardo Machado y Morales. Whatever he does is for Cuba's sake, for our sake, for liberty's sake. Yes, the university is closed, but closed because irresponsible students and professors mistook license for liberty, talked communism, plotted the overthrow of free institutions. President Machado is eternally grateful to the United States, and will show this gratitude by stamping out communism in Cuba and preventing its spread to our shores. Furthermore, the Cuban press is free—free to print the truth. Machado cannot permit a few editors wilfully to distort the news. There have been killings. The President admits this tacitly. Unfortunately there are some irresponsible people in Cuba who have not learned to live under the orderly rule of constitutional government.

It costs General Machado anxious days and sleepless nights to protect our liberties. He is a haunted man. The palace is an armed garrison. The President's comings and goings are screened with secrecy. Three armed cars, the President in the center, dash through the Havana streets. He knows not whom to trust. His private guards are changed time and again. His violence squad, the Porra, strikes here and there at a venture. The trussed-up bodies of students are found in unfrequented streets—shot in the back, shot while "attempting to escape." In one week recently five students were shot in Havana streets. A steady stream of prisoners goes to El Principe and to the Isle of Pines. Scores are held without trial "at the disposition of the President." Men disappear in the night and are not heard of again. Machado sits uneasily in his marble palace wondering when his turn will come.

Havana is a whispering gallery. Across the cafe table, after a swift glance around, you are told that Señor So-and-so disappeared last night, that he was a member of the A. B. C., that his house has been searched, that no one knows where he has been taken. Behind locked doors, with curtains drawn, lowered voices tell the story of friends and relatives. Stories grow in the telling. There is no press. Yes, said one editorial writer to me, I am perfectly free to write—about stars and flowers. The truth is bad enough, and as the stories pass from mouth to mouth Machado becomes a gargantuan bloodletter and terror stalks the streets at midday.

For three years the terror has increased. The impatient Cubans are determined to end it. Machado is virtually deserted save by the army which he pays, the office-holders, and a few foreigners who find him pliable. Cuba is united in saying that Machado must go. Various groups are aligned against him.

The political opposition is divided into three main

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camps. Former President Mario Menocal leads the conservatives—from Miami. He is the traditional Cuban politician. He was the legally elected President from 1913 to 1917 and the de facto President from 1917 to 1921. A man of undoubted force, he commands a large personal following. But even the barbarities of the Machado regime have not erased the memories of Menocal's inept and wasteful administrations. Not so bad as Machado, not so cruel, but corrupt—so runs the common estimate of the man. Colonel Carlos Mendieta leads the Union Nacionalista. Mendieta, of all "los hombres del '95," as the A. B. C. describes the old guard, seems to command the greatest respect. When I met him a few weeks ago in Miami, I felt his warmth and patriotism. Former Mayor Miguel Mariano Gomez of Havana leads the Miguelist wing. Gomez is the perfect Rotarian, the good fellow of the plot. He would make an excellent spokesman for Cuba at Pan-American conferences. These three factions of the political opposition have now united in a pact and an appeal to the Cuban people to oust Machado, to set up a provisional government, and to assure fair elections.

It was an evil day for President Machado when three years ago he nailed shut the doors of the university, stationed police guards, and turned five thousand students into the streets. The Directorio Estudiantil is their answer. The Directorio carries the message of revolt into every village and crossroads of the island by means of a newspaper which, in spite of the police, in spite of bloody reprisals, is regularly distributed and eagerly read. These students are meeting secretly, studying, planning. They know that the old men of Cuba have failed, and they eagerly await their own hour. Cuban patriotism in their case is no refuge for scoundrels. Clear-eyed, clear-headed, they plot and plan for Cuba Libre. The Porra pursues them relentlessly. Their dead bodies are found in the streets. Prostitutes have been employed to attack the women students in the streets and to cut their clothes with knives. You cannot talk with one of these students without hearing of dear friends, sisters, brothers, fiances, who are dead, scarred, in prison. Many professors of the National University have kept faith with the students. They too have paid the penalty of death, imprisonment, or exile. Venerable José Varona, dean of Cuban philosophers, eighty-eight years old, still lives in Havana and refuses to keep silent. Machado dares not touch him, for he is the living symbol of Cuba's fairest aspirations.

By far the most important and powerful of the forces of the opposition is the A. B. C., a secret organization enrolling between 7,000 and 10,000 members. It is organized in "cells" of ten members each. No member is supposed to know any others except those in his own cell. The A. B. C. was not originally designed as an instrument of reprisal. It did not resort to violence until every effort for a peaceable solution had failed. Machado assumed power on May 20, 1925. Ninety days later his agents brutally murdered Armando Andre, editor of *El Dia*. Killings from that day to this have continued with increasing frequency. The A. B. C. estimates that Machado's murders have reached a total of over 2,000. Impartial observers place the figure nearer 1,000. The A. B. C. was not organized until the fall of 1931, after the failure of the August revolution in that year. The first reprisal of the A. B. C. took place on July 9, 1932, more than seven years after Machado began his policy of terrorism. Its victim was Calvo, the head of the secret police, who was killed. Since then the bombs of the A. B. C. have reached the official household of Machado. They have felled some of his chief agents. The members of the A. B. C. struck as Machado had taught them to strike. His violence finally begot theirs.

I write no brief for terrorism. I only report what I have heard and seen. I think of men and women, educated, sensitive, strong, who calmly admit that they belong to the A. B. C., that they now approve of the measures taken. They are now willing to kill, and if need be, to be killed, for the sake of the freedom of their country. I think of one girl, cultured, privileged, beautiful. "I would willingly carry the bomb myself which would put an end to Machado, and if need be, to me also." She is not exceptional.

The A. B. C. is far more than an instrument of terror. Terrorism has become an integral part of its program, a reasonable and necessary part in the judgment of its leaders. It is easy to forget that liberty has always exacted its price, and that often the price has been violence and willingness to die. These Cuban boys and girls are meeting death every day, for the sake of conscience and without fear. But the emphasis is swiftly changing. The A. B. C. regards itself as the party of Cuba's renewal. It plans for the day when it can come out into the open. It has issued a manifesto to the Cuban people which outlines plans and purposes and calls for recruits "for the renewal of the life of Cuba . . . to all Cubans of good-will and clean hands who have not lost their faith in the possibility of Cuba's redemption by Cubans."

The A. B. C. is a youth movement. The days of "los hombres del '95" are done. The old leaders served as a bridge between the colony and the republic, but their force is spent. They were corrupted by the spoils of office. They must give way to new men, new measures, a new Cuba. The A. B. C. quotes José Martí, who prophesied that after independence had been won, the real war for liberty must be fought. The manifesto interprets Cuba's debacle in economic terms. It contrasts the colony with the republic. In colonial days Spaniards held the public offices and strutted on the public stage, while Cubans owned and worked the land. The wars which began in 1868 and ended in the war of 1898 changed all that. Cuba was freed, but at a price. Cubans now hold the political positions, but the foreigner owns the land and reaps the profits. The establishment of the republic marked a rush for jobs. Veterans of the war and politicians demanded salaries. As government jobs increased, Cuba's economic situation grew worse. Politicians secured loans from outsiders, thereby bringing Cuba into deeper vassalage. Financially, Cuba became an appendage of Wall Street. American banks, American utility interests, American sugar interests became the rulers.

The sugar industry, according to the A. B. C., constitutes an economic state within the political state, wielding virtually unlimited power and subjecting vast masses of Cubans to its arbitrary rule. Less than 200 sugar centrals control more than 5,500,000 acres of sugar land. One American company controls about 670,000 acres. Within these holdings law is company made—with private railroads, private ports, and company-controlled municipalities. "If this process develops without interruption," says the A. B. C., "Cuba will be converted into one great sugar plantation with a population of West Indian Negroes, a pusillanimous native bureau-

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cracy, a government which receives orders from Wall Street, and a flag—symbol of its independence." The A. B. C. interprets Cuba's present ills against this economic background. These ills are as follows:

1. The atrophy of civic conscience. Economic dependence bred an attitude of passivity and hopelessness toward public affairs. The Cuban served outside masters. These masters favored the Cubans who would do their will. Banks loaded loans upon servile presidents. Loans became new millstones about the neck of free Cuba. "From being an economic slave," says the A. B. C., "the worker tended to pass step by step into a condition of moral slavery—he became a fellow whose will was free only up to the point where it conflicted with the will of his master. . . . A band of bureaucrats is converted into a flock of sheep and sycophants."

This atrophy reached into the ranks of the leaders. "It is melancholy," notes the manifesto, "that lawyers of high standing, in order to obtain juicy retainers, should sell their souls to the devil. . . . So it is that economic dependence begins by weakening the civic will and ends by corrupting it altogether."

2. The reelection evil. Where economic opportunities are few, as in Cuba, public office assumes great importance. Cuban politicians have developed fierce appetite for office. Once in, they are hard to dislodge. Like Tammany chiefs they have learned how easy it is to live off the state. Therefore, Machado, Menocal, and all the lesser fry.

3. The use of the army as an instrument of despotism. Cuba needs no army against foreign foes. Theoretically, the only need for an army is for police purposes. Actually, the Cuban army is chiefly useful for the maintenance of despotism. The Cuban army of 12,000 men is a professional army, bought and paid for by Machado. The soldiers are paid, the teachers are not.

4. The degradation of Congress. Congress has been made Machado's sounding-board. Through the control of the national lottery and through the distribution of the highly profitable collectorships Machado can buy and hold Congressmen. The A. B. C. proposes to abolish the lottery, and quotes the words of Martí who warned against the "debility inevitably produced in the man whose reliance is upon sources of well-being other than his own strength and courage."

5. The prostitution of the judiciary. Machado dominates the courts, including the Supreme Court. Judges who refuse to obey are broken. A servile judiciary completes the breakdown of constitutional liberties.

6. The cheapening of cultural standards. The university is closed. Professors who refuse to support Machado have been imprisoned, killed, driven into exile. For three years the educational system of the island has been at a standstill. Writers dare not speak their mind.

All this is part and parcel of Cuba's economic state. "A parasitic economy begets a slavish culture" is the A. B. C.'s conclusion. President Machado must be regarded as the consummation of all these economic and political forces.

This much seems clear—Machado's time is up. Whether his end comes with his voluntary surrender of a power which he holds in clear defiance of Cuban wishes, by tyrannicide, or in response to firm diplomatic pressure from Washington—it cannot be far off. Something must be done. But how, by whom, and to what end? The Cuban political opposition seems to rely upon a combination of moral pressure from Washington and a surprise attack from forces which they are preparing. General Menocal made it clear to me that he would welcome diplomatic pressure from Washington. But what have they to offer? They answer, a provisional government under some neutral leader who will assure fair elections. But what then? Will the old men of Cuba still rule? Will the National City and Chase banks and allied interests continue their old role of chamberlains to acquiescent presidents?

The A. B. C. and the students will go part way with the politicians, but they are under no delusions. They know that the old men are not to be trusted. They propose an economic and political house-cleaning. They propose to right the wrongs inherent in the land system—to recapture the large land holdings and encourage colonization of small farmers. They propose the reorganization of the economic structure, beginning with the banks. They propose a national bank of issue, national currency, national savings banks, a national agrarian bank for the financing of farmers' cooperatives. They propose the nationalization of railroads and utilities. They propose a sound modern program of social legislation. They propose a political realignment, with the reduction of the presidential power and the increase of the power of Congress, with limitations upon tenure of office, the end of the lottery, the substitution of compulsory military service for the present professional army, the independence of the judiciary, and a national system of public education with a free autonomous university. The A. B. C. invites no intervention. It asks true self-determination for Cuba. That means the end of the Platt Amendment and the end of dictation, whether it be from Wall Street or Washington.

What will the United States do about Cuba? Since 1898 we have done almost every conceivable thing about Cuba. We have ruled with marines, we have ruled with "advisers," we have ruled by pressure. During the past four years we have reverted to the Root interpretation of the Platt Amendment and have tried keeping hands off—at least the State Department has done so. It remains to be determined exactly and to what degree the National City and Chase banks have been responsible for keeping Machado in power.

One course we have not yet tried. We have not yet done the thing of which we have boasted—given Cuba freedom. We could do it. It would involve risks—the risk of greater chaos. If we have any lingering faith in democracy, we will do it. Cuba must learn to rule as we learn—blindly, haltingly. There would be lighter hearts in Havana if next week the new American Ambassador could drive to the Palacio Nacional to present his credentials to the President of the Republic of Cuba, and after the customary forms were over could say:

"Mr. President, under the terms of the Platt Amendment we have the right to intervene for the protection of human lives. We do not wish to intervene, but may I take this occasion to remind you that for eight years you have had your chance to rule and to amass a competence, but that Cuba will no longer follow your leadership? There is no peace ahead for you. Surely you find no satisfaction in prolonging the suffering. Can you not, for reasons of health, decide to take a well-earned rest? Paris is beautiful in the spring. There is a boat tomorrow."

The President of Cuba would catch that boat.

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# In the Driftway

THE Drifter finds himself in a surprisingly small minority in his complete satisfaction with the first, last, and only American appearance of George Bernard Shaw—which by the way should provide the old gentleman with enough lectures, scoldings, and mere quips to keep him busy until death discovers him and has, for once, the last word. On second thought, the Drifter realizes of course that the manner in which the American press and public received G. B. S. was quite inevitable. They could hardly have been expected to like a famous wit who chose to tall about serious matters, or worse still a literary lion who preached socialism. The newspapers printed his speech in full, since it was his speech. The radio was turned over to him, since it was he. So much for American generosity and love of celebrity. But on the editorial pages of the important press he was dismissed with petulance or condescension; and 399 people called up the radio station while he was talking and asked to have him turned off and out.

* * * * *

ONE other call came in—from a newspaperman who said Shaw was fine. On the whole the reporters, often, it seemed, in spite of themselves, were sympathetic to the completely unpathetic Irish visitor. This too was to be expected. For newspaper reporters, perhaps as the result of constant contact with cruel facts, are almost to a man romantic socialists under the skin. (The most romantic and socialistic invariably end as Washington correspondents who consider themselves hard-boiled and yet go on expecting politicians to act intelligently.)

* * * * *

AMONG the intellectuals Shaw was dismissed in more intelligent ways. His logic was assailed. His financial remarks were laughed away with the light superiority of a brilliant freshman who has just finished a course in finance. His speech, said the slaves of form, was not a speech at all but a rambling, unrounded pouring out of ideas that were neither new nor striking. Still others invoked that classic device for coping with Shaw which consists in holding up to kindly ridicule the well-known Shavian devices for obtaining publicity.

* * * * *

BUT the Drifter, perhaps because he is a sentimental old newspaper reporter himself, can accept neither the petulant dismissals of the capitalist press, which disliked Shaw's speech because it was socialism and not uproariously funny, nor even the more intelligent dismissals. The Drifter found the Shavian discourse on The Future of Political Science in America intensely stimulating, profound, penetrating, and civilized. The world needs at least one man in every generation who is in a position to say what he pleases—and has something to say. George Bernard Shaw, standing on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House with Jackson Reynolds of the First National Bank on one side and Thomas Lamont of J. P. Morgan and Company on the other, told the American people that the financiers have run us into the ditch, that our Constitution is a charter of anarchism, that the capitalist system has broken down, that newspapers exist for the purpose of concealing the truth, that America saved Communist Russia, and that the only nations actually opposed to war are Communist countries which have more important things to do at home. And George Bernard Shaw was not singing an aria from grand opera. These ideas are not new. They are exceedingly important. And when the Drifter thinks of them being turned loose in the sitting-rooms of America by the courtesy of that revolutionary body, the National Broadcasting Company, he takes his entire wardrobe off to G. B. S.

THE DRIFTER

# Correspondence

## One Way Out

TO THE EDITORS OF THE NATION:

We all greatly enjoyed out here *The Nation's* account of the editorial silence of New York newspapers with regard to the National City Bank. We need a daily paper in New York that will tell the people the truth, come what will. The feeling against Wall Street in this part of the country is beyond anything I have ever seen. If it continues to rise as it is rising now, the time cannot be far distant when someone will stand up to propose that we detach New York for gambling purposes, as Monte Carlo has been detached from Europe.

SHADE OF THOMAS JEFFERSON

*St. Louis, Mo., March 25*

## No Reflection Intended

TO THE EDITORS OF THE NATION:

In his article entitled Gold-Plated Anarchy appearing in *The Nation* of April 5 Donald Richberg, in describing efforts of a committee of independents to defeat Thompson in the Dever-Thompson campaign for mayor of Chicago a few years ago, tells of a series of articles which he planned to write for the Chicago *Daily News* exposing Insull's support of Thompson. George Brennan, the democratic boss who supported the candidacy of Dever, according to Mr. Richberg, urged that publication of the articles be stopped because of threats that if they were continued Insull money would be used to turn democratic committeemen to Thompson. I quote Mr. Richberg:

> "I can't afford to lose my organization," Brennan said. He could not stop our independent committee; but he did persuade the *News* that Insull could and would buy the election outright if the articles continued. So they stopped.

In that political campaign the *Daily News* earnestly supported Mayor Dever for reelection and as earnestly opposed Thompson, but neither then nor at any other time did it take instructions from a political boss. To a request that he set the *Daily News* right before the readers of *The Nation* in the matter of the Insull-Thompson articles, Mr. Richberg has replied by a telegram in which he says:

> Referring to your question concerning the accuracy of my article in *The Nation* entitled Gold-Plated Anarchy permit me to state that no reflection whatever upon the *Daily News* was intended or should be read into the article. Although Brennan originally said, as I wrote, that he could not stop the independent committee, I am informed that he did afterwards persuade a majority of the committee that

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further publication of articles showing the Insull-Thompson alliance would be injurious for the reason stated in my recent *Nation* article. Whether the *Daily News* agreed or disagreed with the committee would make no difference if the committee ceased to give out material for publication. Therefore responsibility for wise or unwise action rested solely upon the committee.

*Chicago, April 5* CHARLES H. DENNIS,
Editor the *Daily News*

# Intellectuals and the Depression

TO THE EDITORS OF THE NATION:

To the article, These They Cannot Take, in your issue of March 22, I would like to add a few reservations based on observations in an average Southern city during the past few years. I have seen genuinely intellectual persons stripped of their fine interests, their spiritual resources, despite their increased leisure for those hobbies "whose values are still sound."

I have seen a group of twelve brilliant men, who in years of plenty formed a stimulating intellectual forum, peter out at a time when the members had more time to spend in research work—but, also, insistent new worries. At the beginning of last autumn the group made a last feeble attempt to function and finally ceased. It is now being revived as a fishing club.

Why is it that open forums are weakening, little theaters tottering? These are small social phenomena compared with the plight of great opera companies in the East, but they are significant in the Bible belt. In our part of the country we cannot help noting that concert appearances of the world's greatest artists are poorly attended, while night clubs do a land-office business and visiting musical shows, both the clever and the cheap varieties, are sold out.

*Houston, Tex., March 26* ANNIE NATHAN

# The Anarchists in 1917

TO THE EDITORS OF THE NATION:

In his interesting article Trotzky and Revolution in *The Nation* some weeks ago Benjamin Stolberg said that between July and September, 1917, Kerensky "gathered around him for an attack on the left all the forces arrayed against the social revolution—the liberals, the Mensheviks, the Right Social Revolutionaries, the Anarchists." The inclusion of the Anarchists is not warranted as a matter of purely historical fact. In four out of the five passages in which Trotzky refers to the Anarchists in the second and third volume of his "History of the Russian Revolution," he speaks of their struggle *against* Kerensky. The cooperation of the Anarchists with the Bolsheviks during the early period of the November revolution is too well known to require further emphasis. The cases of Bill Shatoff and particularly of the Anarchist sailor Zhelezniakov, who actually proclaimed the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly early in 1918, are symbolic of that early cooperation. The Anarchists broke with the Bolsheviks later—but this has nothing to do with their actual record in 1917. In mentioning the Anarchists among the allies of Kerensky Mr. Stolberg was apparently thinking of Peter Kropotkin, who had arrayed himself with the Provisional Government in the matter of national defense. But Kropotkin, though generally recognized as the theoretical head of anarchism before the war, had since 1914 been deserted by practically all his former followers, and on the occasion to which Trotzky refers the great Anarchist writer was speaking exclusively in his own name.

*New York, March 20* MAX NOMAD

# The One and the Many

TO THE EDITORS OF THE NATION:

Why does *The Nation* not discuss more fully the merits of socialism, communism, anarchism, syndicalism, and so forth from the philosophical and technical viewpoint? In all the years that I have read *The Nation* I have very seldom come across the names of Proudhon, Fourrier, Bakunin, or other anarchists, yet it is a historical fact that they present the individualistic aspect of society. At present collectivism in one form or other holds the center of the stage, but there certainly is need for a discussion of individualistic philosophy, all the more so since the problem of the one and the many is still unsolved.

*Eau Claire, Wis., April 15* F. WERTGEN

# Unfair to Hitler

TO THE EDITORS OF THE NATION:

I am amazed at the stand you are taking toward the new German government and I want to raise my protests against the unfair articles appearing in *The Nation.* Why don't you investigate affairs more thoroughly before you join the general howl about Hitler and poison the mind of the American public?

You seem to be ignorant of the fact that the Communists and Socialists had gained power in Germany to such an extent that one more year of such weak government would have seen the country well on the path of Russia. Such corruption had invaded every phase of life as had never before been known in Germany. Since many Communists are Jews, naturally that element had to suffer with the rest, but that any atrocities have been committed has yet to be proved.

You say that concerts have been stopped because the conductor was a Jew, referring doubtless to Bruno Walter. Did you investigate the reason for this? Mr. Walter received a salary of 32,000 marks. He was allowed to conduct many concerts outside of Berlin, which increased his income considerably. In view of the fact that so many artists are starving he was asked to pay for his substitute when he was away. He refused and was dismissed. Is this fair or not?

For twenty years I have read *The Nation* and I have admired it for its decency and fairness, but you can consider my relation with it ended when my subscription has run out.

*Chicago, April 16* THEODORE J. SCHERZ

# Our Merchant Marine

TO THE EDITORS OF THE NATION:

*The Nation* has questioned more than once the wisdom of government aid to shipping as provided for in the Merchant Marine Act of 1928. The act is designed to preserve our commercial fleet on routes considered essential to the welfare of the country through the granting of mail contracts. Last year the government paid out $15,847,664 more than would have been expended on a strictly poundage basis. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 1932, the amount was $19,164,337. When the act was passed, the maximum annual sum was estimated at $30,000,000.

Because of the construction-loan and mail-aid provisions of the Merchant Marine Act, American shipping has shown a highly encouraging growth during the past four years. Some 70 American lines now operate 600 steamers to ports in 125 foreign countries, islands, and territories. Already 42 new vessels have

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been constructed and 39 others reconditioned, involving an expenditure of $150,000,000 in American shipyards. All of this has been accomplished at a cost to the government of less than $20,000,000 a year, federal funds having been lent at the same rate of interest which the government itself was paying.

Is the government's policy justified? Do we, in fact, need an American merchant marine? Friends of the merchant marine point to the present status of domestic-flag shipping as ample justification of the government's course. They declare that federal support is absolutely necessary to offset the lower building and operating costs of foreign lines, and that commercial and military security demands the development of a strong commercial fleet.

Shipowners regret no less than other business men the rigors of international competition and the horror of armed conflict. But the former we have with us always, and the latter is ever imminent. Some day, when strife and rivalry and nationalism shall have been banished from the earth, this nation can afford to ship its goods in foreign bottoms. Until then, it behooves us to eschew so far as we are able the delivery wagons of our competitors. Experience has taught us the folly of depending upon foreign carriers. We have enjoyed prosperity, it is true, but we have paid dearly for our failure to provide our own ships during such periods as the Boer War, the World War, and the British coal strike of 1926. At three separate times our commodities were left to glut the home market and rot on the wharf, while foreign ships scurried for more profitable business. Thus, at the very time when our products would have commanded high prices we were unable to make delivery. Farmers and manufacturers have lost hundreds of millions of dollars through the sudden withdrawal of foreign vessels.

An American fleet also guarantees essential service, and acts as permanent insurance against oppressive rates. This is no imaginary danger. Before we had ships of our own, the service provided from our shores to South America—as a case in point—was greatly inferior to that provided from European ports. Moreover, our freight was frequently routed through an extra port. Cargo bound for the Continent was for a long time sent by way of Liverpool, thus giving British manufacturers an added advantage. And rates were all too often based upon what the traffic would bear. After the World War foreign operators were collecting $40 a ton on American products. The Shipping Board threw its war-built fleet into the overseas trade and rates dropped 50 per cent. This country saved many millions from that single maneuver.

Critics of the government's merchant-marine policy would do well to consider the magnitude of our present foreign trade and its importance in the nation's economic structure. In 1929 we exported and imported goods valued at $9,000,000,000. During 1931, after two years of depression, our foreign trade was still valued at half that amount. The less than $20,000,000 a year thus far paid out in mail aid is a cheap guaranty of delivery and very reasonable insurance against onerous rates. This $20,000,000, moreover, is keeping alive an industry in which investment runs into the hundreds of millions. American-flag ships now carry a third of our foreign trade, for which they annually receive some $300,000,000 in freight rates. Some 83 per cent of this money is respent in American ports, thus keeping in this country millions of dollars which would otherwise go to foreign operators.

Finally, let us consider the military angle. The writer is not unaware of the trend toward internationalism. All honor to peace workers in their fight. But in an explosive world it would seem the part of wisdom to make some preparation for possible detonations. Merchant ships are the one implement of war also adaptable to peace-time pursuits. Those built under the Merchant Marine Act have been passed by a naval board for speedy and economical conversion in time of emergency. If we should be embroiled in war, we have the auxiliary ships without which a modern navy is helpless. And if, as we all hope, peace remains with us, we have transportation for our goods without dependence upon the conveyances of commercial rivals.

*New York, April 15* RUSSELL J. BAKER

## *The Nation* and the Farmer

TO THE EDITORS OF THE NATION:

*The Nation,* it seems to me, is in strange company in its persistent hostility to every plan which might give relief to farmers. Toward labor *The Nation* is open-handed; it would not oppose, for instance, a program of wage maintenance on the ground that consumers would have to pay for it—as they would certainly have to. Why, with respect to the farmer, does *The Nation* side with processors, grain exchanges, Mark Sullivan, and the less-enlightened industrialists?

*The Nation's* one positive suggestion is "opening foreign markets." But while every farm economist believes in lower tariffs, there is a real question whether the foreign market can reabsorb surpluses built on expanded schedules of the war period. Moreover, the United States has changed from a debtor to a creditor country. The surplus problem seems likely to remain disastrous, and if *The Nation* disapproves of such methods of solving it as are suggested, it seems bound to propose something else.

The farmer, like the general wage-earner, has no bargaining power and hence no defense against deflation and the whole magnifying violence of price fluctuation. And while the present agricultural bill is mainly designed for relief, I believe *The Nation* should not overlook the fact that it opens the way for developing methods of control in agriculture which are the only hope of the future. For the first time, in Mr. Wallace and Mr. Tugwell, the country has enlightened agronomic talent directed toward agricultural planning. In view of this, it seems unfortunate that *The Nation* should, at the outset, align itself with reaction.

*Des Moines, April 30* FERNER NUHN

[*The Nation* does not believe it is reactionary to oppose the levy of a sales tax of 100 to 200 per cent on the necessaries of life. If tariff schedules, particularly our own, are sufficiently reduced, the fact of our being a creditor country will not, in our opinion, materially reduce our ability to sell farm products abroad. *The Nation* favors, as an additional and highly important measure, the devaluation of the dollar.—EDITORS THE NATION.]

## Life of Galsworthy

TO THE EDITORS OF THE NATION:

I have been intrusted with the official Life of the late John Galsworthy and should appreciate communications therefor from any quarter—whether in the way of personal reminiscences and anecdotes bearing on any period of his life or phase of his activities (which should be sent direct to me at The Oaks, 59 Parkside, Wimbledon, S. W. 19, London) or in the way of original letters (which should be sent to Maxwell E. Perkins, Charles Scribner's Sons, 597 Fifth Avenue, New York).

Any letters so sent will be copied in New York under the supervision of Mr. Perkins, who will return the letters to their owners.

*London, April 10* H. V. MARROT

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# Books, Architecture, Drama

## Now in the Hive

By ROBERT P. TRISTRAM COFFIN

Now in the twilight of the hive
A simple fluid grows alive.

A mighty and a delicate hand
Moves unseen and draws a band,

Scrolls concentric harmonies
That in two warm weeks will be bees.

Where nothing was, two jewels rise
To be the rainbows used for eyes.

The tender fingers hover there
And leave two wings of woven air.

Out of nothing save the sweet
There glows intelligence and heat.

The strange hand moves in each frail jar
And leaves a loveliness like a star.

And this same hand at this same hour
Bends far fire to its power,

Sets the bees of fire free
Which are the singing nebulae.

## Walden Revisited

WHEN Thoreau retired to Walden in 1845 he was nearly a century ahead of his time. It is true that the Concord he left seems a village to us and true that we can hardly conceive of a society more simple than the one he chose to flee from, but Thoreau, with a prophet's vision, was really running away from something which was yet to be. Refusing a rug with which a kind neighbor had offered to cover the bareness of his floor, he remarked that it was best to avoid the beginnings of evil, and it was upon that principle that he renounced our industrial society before the society itself had become firmly established.

And yet, premature as he may seem to have been, he knew what he was doing and why he was doing it. At the moment Karl Marx had been meeting Engels in Paris and Henry George was probably playing marbles with some urchin of his own age, but Thoreau had already penetrated the evils of what we have learned to call the "profit system," and he summarized them in a few sentences which ten thousand rephrasings have not essentially improved. "I cannot believe that our factory system is the best mode by which men may get clothing. As far as I have heard or observed, the principal object is not that mankind may be well and honestly clad but, unquestionably, that corporations may be enriched."

So much for the diagnosis. Upon that most of our present-day prophets would agree, but it is there that the agreement stops, and no proposed solution is less likely to receive a sympathetic consideration than the one which Thoreau undertook to defend. He was not only an individualist but also every dreadful thing which that term implies. He sought first of all his own salvation; he quite openly distrusted those who would do good to others before they had discovered how to do good to themselves; and far from seeking some social discipline which would unite humanity into a manageable mass of essentially uniform creatures with predictable reactions, he desired, so he said, "as many different persons in the world as possible." Even in his own day he was called heartless by Pharisees who asked him what part of his income ($36.78 for a period of eight months) he gave to the poor, but he was not impressed. One just man might, he thought, be saved from the tepid Gomorrah called Concord, and one just man was worth saving.

Now I am not unaware of the objections which may be raised to conduct so—I believe "anti-social" is the word—as this. But the real point is less the individualism of Thoreau than an attitude toward society anterior to that individualism. He was one of the first to see toward what the world was tending, and in the face of the tendency he took an attitude far more radical than most radicals have dared to assume.

At best, the latter have hoped only to tame and to control the destructive forces, to teach mankind how to elude the evils of a world in which organization and machinery were gradually becoming more powerful than humanity itself. This world they have taken as inescapable premise, and they have argued only about what we must do in order to survive in it. Since population is increasing, we must have machinery or perish; since machine production implies more intricate international economics, we must devise a more and more complicated system of economic control to keep our economy straight. The task is arduous, perhaps even, as some have feared, beyond human capacity, but the race with destruction is on. And by now, so at least the Communists assert, the crisis has become so acute that we must give up many luxuries—such as freedom, speculation, the useless arts, and the diinterested puruit of knowledge—which earlier and simpler societies could still indulge. The mere business of living has become more and more complex and exacting. As the result of progress and the perfection of labor-saving machinery, the task of keeping ourselves alive has become so much more difficult that the margin left to the soul has been narrowed to nothing and we are faced with a monstrous paradox: we can no longer afford those luxuries of the spirit which less advanced peoples not only found time for, but actually counted as the only real justification of life.

Just how much of all this Thoreau actually foresaw it would be difficult to say, and I am inclined to suspect that he never supposed it possible that a world could go as completely mad as he would feel ours to be. He could speak of the immortal soul he had seen creeping down the road of life pushing before it a barn and a hundred acres of land. He could also argue with an Irish laborer in an effort to convince him that it was better to work less and have less than to work more and have more. But it is doubtful if he ever conceived of a world which had got itself involved in

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a method of living so complicated that it was about ready to give up all hope of ever doing more than keep itself going. Yet he did see enough to feel sure that mankind should never attempt what it has since attempted, and his teaching might be summed up in one injunction: keep the world simple; for if you do you will never be faced with the task, certainly unpleasant and perhaps impossible, of managing complexity. Things are in the saddle and ride mankind. We are trying to teach them not to ride us too hard, but perhaps it would be better, as Thoreau would certainly have said, to unseat them instead.

No one could well have had less real influence than he. Because of that fact Walden Ponds are harder to find than they were in 1845, and one cannot retire to any which happen to be available without the courage of an individualism even greater than he was required to possess. And yet the issue has not been quite decided, and if it should by any chance happen that our world, instead of successfully organizing itself into one vast ant-hill, is destined to break up into a thousand fragments, it may still be those individuals here and there persisting who will justify the survival of the fragments. Perhaps only the individual will be saved or is really savable. Perhaps Thoreau was right when he said of the Englishman who went to India to make a fortune so that he might return and live the life of a poet, "He should have gone up to the garret at once."

In any event, if the author of "Walden" were alive today, he would have the pleasure of saying "I told you so," for in the first chapter of that book he wrote, apropos the passion for railroad building:

> Men have an indistinct notion that if they keep up this activity of joint stocks and spades long enough all will at length ride somewhere, in next to no time, and for nothing; but though a crowd rushes to the depot and the conductor shouts "All aboard!" when the smoke is blown away and the vapor condensed it will be perceived that a few are riding, but the rest are run over—and it will be called, and will be, "a melancholy accident."

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

# A Forgotten Hero

*Mike Fink, King of Mississippi Keelboatmen.* By Walter Blair and Franklin J. Meine. Henry Holt and Company. $3.

LITTLE is known about Mike Fink except that he was born at Fort Pitt in 1770, was killed near the Yellowstone River during the winter of 1822-23, and between these years flourished as a boatman on the Ohio and the Mississippi. Thus his career can be seen to have followed the frontier westward—first Pennsylvania, then the lower Mississippi Valley, and finally the Far West of lonely trading-posts. We know a good deal about these three frontiers, and so can give Mike Fink a setting as he travels. But of the fellow himself we have chiefly legends. It is these that his biographers have been interested in collecting.

Mike was a legend while he lived, as Daniel Boone was, and Colonel Crockett; but somehow even his legend has died, and Messrs. Blair and Meine find this hard to understand. Certainly it is not easy to understand. Yet one can guess. Mike was not noble, and by no effort of the folk imagination could he be made noble. He was a cheerful, loud-mouthed ruffian—strong, funny, a tall talker, a hard drinker, a terrible fighter. That was all. It was not enough for a people who quickly came to desire a certain elevation in its heroes, together perhaps with some pretty touch of weakness. Mike had no weaknesses, no melancholies. He was nothing but a Roaring Boy. So he is not honored in his country.

There is no especial point in pitying ourselves for this, yet it must be said that we have lost something valuable. We have lost touch with that gorgeous talk of which Mike, like most members of his profession, was master, and of which the present authors have done well to give many fine specimens. Mike as a fighter is something of a bore, and as a practical joker—a breaker up of camp meetings, a beater up of constables—he is worse. But as a talker he is sublime, and it is as a talker that this book, if anything can do so, will make him survive. "I'll be fly-bowed before sundown to a certingty!" "I'm a Salt River roarer! I'm a ring-tailed squealer! I'm a regular screamer from the ol' Massassip'!" "Hell's bells and pickled panther tails!" So he goes on. Messrs. Blair and Meine have accomplished a good many things in their learned and spirited book, but chief among them is the recovery of this prehistoric lingo.

MARK VAN DOREN

# The Glory of Louisiana

*The Kingfish: A Biography of Huey P. Long.* By Webster Smith. G. P. Putnam's Sons. $2.50.

MR. SMITH'S plodding chronicle shows that there is not much new in Huey, despite the wide swath he is cutting in Washington. At bottom, he is simply a backwoods demagogue of the oldest and most familiar model—impudent, blackguardly, and infinitely prehensile. The notion that there is some mysterious sagacity in him appears to be without ground. In all his career he has never shown any genuine intelligence, but only the most transparent sort of simian trickery. At the time his enemies tried to impeach him in Louisiana he handled himself very stupidly, and came close to being turned out of the governorship. In so far as any purely human agency saved him it was the even greater stupidity of those who sought to put him on the spot. There were some shrewd men among them, but they were too few to carry the rest. The whole combat was typical of political science in the Hookworm Belt. That is to say, it was a fight to the death between gorillas and baboons.

Save in the detail that he never seems to have taught school in his youth, Huey's career has covered ground trodden by hundreds of other Southern and Middle Western windjammers before him. With a common-school education behind him and a set of tough vocal cords in his neck, he applied himself somewhat casually to the study of the law, and as soon as he had a license to practice began to horn into politics. If he differed from the general, it was only in his superior boldness. Instead of going out for the modest office of county attorney and then trying to elevate himself into Congress, which is the orthodox program, he aimed straightway for a loftier and more profitable job—to wit, that of public-service commissioner—and by a lucky fluke he got it. A few years later, at thirty, he was running for governor. That first attempt ended in failure, but four years later he won, and ever since then he has been the undisputed viceroy and captain-general of Louisiana.

Mr. Smith, who is apparently a Louisiana newspaperman, describes his political method in detail. It is based upon the theory that the imbecility of the plain people is usually greatly underestimated and upon the moral principle of you-tickle-me-and-I'll-tickle-you. Huey fetches the anthropoid patriots of the *Hinterwald* by promising them the livers and lights of whatever demons happen to be besetting them—the Standard Oil Company, the railroads, the Pope, the city slickers, the Communists,

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or what you will. And having brought them yelling to the polls, he prepares for the next time by making a discreet and copious distribution of jobs. Thus his organization grows more formidable at every election, and if it were not for treason within its gates he would be irresistible. Already, alas, there are some ugly scars upon his eleemosynary hand, and if natural law holds out, a really bold traitor will arise anon, and poor Huey will be undone. Worse, the villain will not only steal his job, but also try to railroad him to the hoosegow.

Of what use are such men? Obviously, they contribute very little that is valuable to the art of statecraft. Nor is there any evidence that they are edifying examples to the young. My guess is that they serve God and their country by making a good show—expensive, perhaps, but also exhilarating. The processes of government under democracy are normally very gloomy. They enlist a great many almost unbearably humorless men. I believe that it is the divine will that this melancholy should be lightened a bit. To that end there is always a plentiful supply of Huey Longs. H. L. MENCKEN

# "Fragmentary Ends"

*Death in the Woods.* By Sherwood Anderson. Liveright. $2.

WITH two important exceptions the stories in this volume represent a very definite retrogression on the part of an American writer from whose work one has become accustomed to receive an impression of constant growth and development. Neither the sentimental phallicism of "Perhaps Women" nor the timorous overtones of social consciousness of the more recent "Beyond Desire" are present in this book. The crystallization of one or the other of these attitudes that one had half expected does not take place. Nor is it possible to discover any still newer attitude that is offered in their stead. It is as if Mr. Anderson has at last given up the search for some principle of meaning in life that might give order and scale to his writing. Like one of his characters, the professor who is trying to write a book on values, he seems to have decided, "There are only floods, one flood following another." In a word, Mr. Anderson has relaxed into his old and well-known habit of "groping." Such stories as The Return and The Lost Novel mark a return to the thinness of characterization and detail, the diffuse lyricism that we associate with his very earliest work. There is the same monotonous insistence on the inarticulateness of life, the mysterious complexity of even the most ordinary human existences. "There you are. That is all. Life is more like that than people suppose. Little odd fragmentary ends of things. That is about all we get." If we cannot respond to this philosophy with the same sympathy that we did fifteen or even ten years ago, Mr. Anderson himself is to blame. He has played too long on such a fragile theme. And he has at times played on it so well that nothing but his best will satisfy us. Only two of the stories in this collection can compare with the best in "Winesburg" and "The Triumph of the Egg."

The title story is marred by the usual self-consciousness of Mr. Anderson when he feels himself in the presence of a character who is somehow exceptional or "significant." We are reminded just a little too often that the recollection of the old woman in the tale is to the author like "music heard from far off." The objective circumstances of her life are what make her come alive; and the reader's only regret is that these are not "rendered," to use Henry James's favorite word, with sufficient directness and completeness. Especially is this true for the scene in which the woman's dead body is set upon by the hungry dogs in the woods. But despite this failure to make the most of its possibilities the story is effectively moving. "The woman who died was one destined to feed animal life" is the formula that Mr. Anderson works out for his character; and because he is able to discover so definite a formula the story has more significance than any other in the volume. Brother Death, which is interesting for a number of different reasons, succeeds chiefly by virtue of the tree symbol, which binds it together with a greater artistic unity than is common in Anderson's work. The distinct superiority of these two tales over the others in the collection merely serves to confirm the feeling that Mr. Anderson is a writer whose triumphs are accidental, whose command over his material is most precarious, and whose greatest need is for some established point of view that will enable him to develop his medium with more certainty. WILLIAM TROY

# Hart Crane

*The Collected Poems of Hart Crane.* Edited with an Introduction by Waldo Frank. Liveright. $2.50.

HART CRANE, as a poet, had three problems: first, that which every poet confronts, the perfecting of his medium; second, one more peculiar to him since he was both modern and mystic, the integrating of his own life; third, the difficult one in these days of synthesizing through his poetic vision the very world from which he drew the subject matter for his vision.

His medium—the language, imagery, rhythms of his poetry—he did very largely perfect. He was artist enough to use whatever influences in French and English poetry were congenial to him, and completely to assimilate and individualize these influences until they were authentically his own. He was the only American poet to have "acclimatized" the language of the industrial and mechanistic world. He was the only American poet with "so extraordinary a capacity for surrender to the sensations of urban life" that that life furnished most of his imagery. Out of his general imagery, taken from the city, came his symbols, as an inevitable result of his mysticism. I am not forgetting his constant symbol of unity, the sea, but even that symbol of timelessness and eternity is given often in images reflective of city activity. His rhythms, too, grew out of the subject matter he dwelt upon, the city world of poetic reference beyond which gleamed the eternal symbol of the sea. This is, of course, far too simple an analysis of the elements composing his art. His rhetoric was the amazing product of a mind that never saw things singly, of a terrific sensitivity to sounds, sights, tastes, and their indivisibility. In no other modern poetic mind, working in the English language, could a single word set up so many curious sensuous associations. And again and again all these associations came together in a single image with the impact of divination.

A poet's concern must be, Hart Crane writes, "self-disciplined toward a formal integration of experience." This integration begins within the poet's own life. And Hart Crane never quite succeeded in integrating his own personal experience. Therefore the chaos of his inner life. But despite this he remained a poet and he had what he once divined in Whitman, "a peculiar type of perception, capable of apprehending some absolute and timeless concept of the imagination with astounding clarity and conviction." He had identified himself with Poe both in his personal frustrations and in his poetic fulfilment. For him, too, the impression, the mood, intuitively grasped, could be true poetic prophecy. From Whitman he took the theme of vital America and an idealistic optimism. But his mind was in its method of working entirely antithetical to Whitman's. He arrived at synthesis not through an accumulated mass of impressions and an all-embracing wave of the arms, but more directly, intuitively, subjectively, and therefore more economically through the use of symbols made to stand for the

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whole. From Melville and from Whitman, as well as from his own personal experience, he took the sea as symbol of the eternally searching and creative spirit of mankind.

Hart Crane was completely opposed to the philosophical Eliot. With the "Waste Land" he would have nothing to do. He was not born in one of those pauses when the struggle between forces has reached complete balance. But beyond seeming discontinuity, he saw always a continuity. Beneath every sign of disintegration he saw structure. In mass production he saw the religious beauty of anonymous creation. He spun his own faith. It was mystic, romantic, and utterly modern. He accepted his America.

There is no need to go into an exposition of "The Bridge." That has been done. And in the end the lyrics in "White Buildings" may stand as Crane's most nearly perfect work, though not for scope. The "Key West" poems, the volume prepared just before he died, indicate that Crane had taken his critics too seriously and against his own temperament had turned toward simplifying his language and his imagery. His mind would not work that way. Anyone wishing to study Crane's method of writing may compare the two versions of the rather poor poem To Shakespeare. I myself suspect that the version given in the footnotes, in which the tree and Shakespeare's life become one image in words definitive of both, might have been Crane's final choice. It is less simplified, richer. The Broken Tower, in which the mystic symbol, the tower, and the physical symbol, the body, are one and the same thing, is a masterpiece—and it is the work of the Hart Crane who wrote "White Buildings."

Much more could be said about Hart Crane if space permitted. "The Collected Poems" make very clear his importance among American poets. He is more original and more vital than Eliot, though not so great a technician. He is the only American poet with a rich lyrical feeling who has attempted more than a personal synthesis; the only mystic who would prophesy concerning universal human values in the modern scene. He rejected no aspect of life, shut out from his consciousness no fact in the industrial world. All that he asked for his genius was "the power of acting creatively under laws of its own organization." He felt that the modern poet could not assume the role of philosopher or theologian, but he believed it his own function to fuse the "intractable" into a universal vision. For this great task he did not allow himself time enough before death. But his poetry contains all the evidences that he might have succeeded. EDA LOU WALTON

# Shorter Notices

*Hardy Perennial.* By Helen Hull. Coward-McCann. $2.50.

In the general miscellany of attitudes that American writers have adopted toward their material, Miss Hull's approach is significant. Neither violently attacking the American scene in revenge for a sense of exile, nor stylizing it in mannerisms of language, nor plumbing the lower neurotic levels, she works on the assumption that there is a set of emotions specifically American and at the same time positive and mature—material that is ready to the hand of the writer and for which he need feel neither contempt nor apology. This acceptance, generally condemned as sentimentality, is as much a part of the power of her novel as are the skill and beauty of her presentation. While "Hardy Perennial" is the story of Cornelia Prescott—into whose life Miss Hull has projected a new reading of the American mother-myth, showing the woman's loneliness, the sense of anonymity and frustration that comes to her with the increasing years of service to her family—the portraits of Horace Prescott and Ellery Emmons are equally significant. After reading Miss Hull's analysis of the reactions of these two men who for one reason or another are severed from economic contact with life, one has a realization of the real middle-class tragedy of the present time. This tragedy, Miss Hull gives us to understand, is not primarily economic but psychological, involving men as it does in the need to find new values and to build a life that is simpler, less extraverted, and more human than the old one.

*Edward Weston.* New York: E. Weyhe. $12.50.

Mr. Weston is one of the best—though not one of the best-advertised—of modern photographers. Having begun to take pictures some twenty years ago, he has gradually evolved a style of his own which is entirely free from all spectacular eccentricity, but which is unescapably powerful and original. His striking portraits are all taken in full sunlight and exhibit therefore a boldness which only handling as skilful as his prevents from being harsh. Even better, however, are the still lifes, in which he is apparently even more interested. Usually the subjects are of the simplest—a mushroom, a pepper, or an eroded rock—and though superficially the photographs seem to be only the most uncompromising naturalism, they have a quite individual power and charm. Nothing is easier for a photographer than to startle us into attention by the presentation on a large scale of some familiar object made strange by isolation. Few things, on the other hand, are more difficult than to justify this process as Mr. Weston does by so thoroughly dramatizing the form of the object as to make it repay close and repeated scrutiny. The present volume presents thirty-nine full-page plates of his work, beautifully and soberly reproduced.

*World Drama.* Edited by Barrett H. Clark. D. Appleton and Company. Two volumes. $10.

*Masterpieces of the Russian Drama.* Edited with an Introduction by George Rapall Noyes. D. Appleton and Company. $7.50.

Each of these anthologies justifies itself by presenting in convenient form important plays not always included in such collections. Among his forty-six plays Mr. Clark finds room for several unhackneyed works like "The Chalk Circle" from medieval China and Hans Sachs's "The Wandering Scholar from Paradise." Professor Noyes gives us only Mayakovsky's "Mystery-Bouffe" from the post-revolutionary drama, but in addition to Gogol, Tolstoy, Andreyev, and Chekhov he presents plays from dramatists less well known in America. Among them is "The Poor Bride" by the enormously popular Ostrovsky.

*How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth? An Essay in the Theory and Practice of Shakespeare Criticism.* By L. C. Knights. Cambridge: The Minority Press. 2*s.* 6*d.*

*The Education of Shakespeare. Illustrated from the Schoolbooks in Use in His Time.* By George A. Plimpton. Oxford University Press. $2.

Mr. Knights has his fun with those critics of Shakespeare who think that the plays are built around characters and who even go so far as to speculate about the lives of these characters before and after, as if they were "real" persons. Mr. Knights demonstrates the irrelevance of such a procedure, but his pamphlet is not long enough to give very much meaning to the method he would substitute. He would have it that the plays are collections of words, and that the whole meaning of a given collection is something great and subtle and various which transcends character and plot. The plays, in short, are poems first and last, and should be studied as such—for their tones, their themes, their effects. Mr. Knights is one of a growing group who speak of Shakespeare in this fashion, and it is certain that they have much to say. So far, however, it has not been said very clearly. Mr. Plimpton's richly illustrated essay on the schoolbooks of Shakespeare's time is based altogether upon the

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contents of his famous library. As he admits, these books educated other men than Shakespeare, and therefore do not explain Shakespeare; but they are of importance in themselves, and Mr. Plimpton's volume is a pleasant contribution to intellectual history.

*Greek Night.* By Pitts Sanborn. The Dial Press. $2.

This is the story of Ranulph Hennessey, to whom all suffering was ugly. "If Ranulph had only been a little different, by this time he'd be an archbishop at least," says Eft, the newt-like encyclopedia of Atlantic seaboard aristocracy. But as it is, Ranulph's priesthood is drastically inverted; his own suffering, from love of his widowed stepmother whom social taboo kept him from marrying, and his impotent pity for all suffering turn into a kind of sensual rage against suffering itself. "Suffering, the holy thing, is filth, I've told you!" he says to Robert Fleming, a normal and unsophisticated young Westerner. Through Fleming's eyes we see Hennessey now holding the world and especially Fleming away from his young stepsister Claire, replica of the dead stepmother, to whom he has transferred his baffled, semi-incestuous possessiveness. "The sardonic in him, and what I might call his inclusive love of the aesthetic," (Eft again) astounds the boy, and the night session they share at the Hennessey country house, when Fleming sees the profoundly grotesque and tragic lengths to which the fury of unbearable pity has led him, is not easily forgotten. Mr. Sanborn writes a cool, adroit prose, and achieves a strangely cumulative effect of suspense and drama—the technique of a mystery writer used for problems not so neatly solvable as murder.

# Architecture

## Slum Unclearance

ARE the poor to be built into our cities, where and as they are? Is their poverty to be recognized, provided for, institutionalized—and maintained? And is this the time for such resignation? The questions are fair in view of the many proposals made by otherwise socially-minded people for "slum clearance." An article in *The Nation* for April 19 by Henry J. Rosner is fairly typical. Mr. Rosner proposes that slum clearance be carried out in behalf of the actual dwellers in the present slums—in other words, that new structures be subsidized at absolutely minimal rents. The agency in charge is to be a municipal housing bureau; the backers are to be the taxpayers; the locale, since Mr. Rosner is drawing a contrast to present procedure, is where the Reconstruction Finance Corporation has placed its first "housing" loan—on the lower New York East Side.

Now let us for a moment pay attention, not to what such proposals intend by way of building agreeable dwelling space, but to what they are ready to accept, out of hand, in the way of evil preliminary conditions:

They accept the poor as such, and their miserable rentals.

They accept the location that these poor are already congregated on: in New York the East Side, and in other cities presumably corresponding locations.

They must sometimes accept enormously expensive land: in the New York plan, $13 a square foot, which is more than half a million dollars an acre. (There is no reason to believe that any municipal agency could condemn land at rates lower than those accepted by the R. F. C.)

Though the buildings are tax-exempt, taxes must be paid on this $13 land.

They accept interest at 5 per cent.

This is an astonishing set of handicaps to accept. Moreover, though the article in question contributes a careful, thorough, and acute analysis of present procedure, the criticism proves to be rather narrow in scope. It proves that the first R. F. C. loan of $8,075,000 was a good piece of business for the recipient, Fred F. French, and almost no relief at all to the very poor. Were that all we could say against it, and were we obliged as an alternative to proceed under all the handicaps that our socially-minded people appear ready to accept, then our case would be feeble indeed.

Today we can be in no such temporizing mood. The failures of business are of a more serious nature than feathering its nest and failing to extend the most-needed aid to the community. The typical and normal real-estate adventure has actually brought community economics to the point of ruin. The Fred F. French deal is simply more of the same. A few more such victories, and not even Mr. French himself will be able to "make money," because the stalemate will be final and complete. If business could not afford to pay Mr. French half a million dollars an acre for his land, neither can the taxpayers; the consequences of a thoroughly rotten and bankrupt speculative system cannot be escaped just by shifting the burden from business to the taxpayers, or otherwise juggling the books.

No planning can do more than add to the hopeless confusion unless it starts from the fundamental facts—the geography of the region, its physical resources, power tools, technical knowledge, the people and their needs. From this standpoint we have no business deciding now to "house" on the New York East Side. According to Clarence Stein, there exist only the most rudimentary preliminary surveys of the region; and this is undoubtedly true of corresponding regions in other large cities too.

We do not know who should live in them—if anyone. And we have no business with $13 land. Dollars are a poor index at best, but even so, Henry Wright has reliably calculated that for even moderately low-cost dwelling space in New York, land at $5 is absolutely top. Anything more, whether paid to speculators, pirates, or honest men, not only arrests the natural downward trend already under way, but creates dislocations between land price and income that no manipulation can ultimately disguise. And if this is true with rents moderately low, what about minimal ones? Also, have we any business making a habit of 5 per cent interest, when the debt structure is already heavily overexpanded and apparently ready to burst? It is credibly calculated that in the United States business enterprise at present should pay an interest rate of zero or less!

What can be done? A thoroughgoing survey must be made of the country in its true physical as against its false financial relationships. In the meantime only the soundest of projects can try to proceed under present terms. There is already current a story about responsible architects asked by lending institutions to plan something that would "save investments" in a region like the New York East Side. The architects replied: "We will survey the region. We will map its requirements, then make plans to secure the health and comfort of the population. The structures specified will be sound and efficient to build. But we will not undertake to save your investments. We are technicians."

In the present pass one might intrust subsidized operations to planners of a cynical hue, but not to good-hearted ones. The good-hearted ones are likely to take over the business community's welfare responsibilities, as the Socialists did in Germany, without the power. The cynical ones, on the contrary, would use any means to secure the erection of the necessary and appropriate physical structures in the right place, and then be prepared to capture them for the commonwealth whenever there might arrive the final stalemate on the dollar-books.

DOUGLAS HASKELL

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# Films

## "Marius" and Others

"MARIUS," at the Fifth Avenue Playhouse, is a pretty straight picturization of the comedy by Marcel Pagnol that has been so popular in France for several seasons. In certain respects it is superior to the original: Alexander Korda (who will be remembered here for his treatment of Erskine's "Helen of Troy") reinforces the mood by an excellent use of the Marseilles background; and the superb acting of Raimu, in the role of César, is seen to even better advantage. The setting of the picture is a tiny cafe on the Marseilles waterfront; the characters are its proprietor César, his son Marius, and the girl Honorine, who keeps a fish stand on the terrace. The story is of the very simplest: Marius, whose dreams turn seaward with the ships in the bay, is torn between the realization of those dreams and his love for Honorine. The trouble begins when on the very eve of his departure for far places he goes home with Honorine and spends the night with her. The scene next morning with his father in which the extreme vulnerability of the feminine nature is explained to him at length is perhaps the richest in the picture. It is filled with that uncynical acceptance of human frailty and illusion, so characteristic of the Latin mind at its best, which pervades the story from beginning to end. For "Marius" may best be described as a witty, charming, and eminently wise allegory of Original Sin. As such it is thoroughly French in mood and attitude, and can be compared only with certain other French films we have seen, such as René Clair's "Sous les toits de Paris," in which we find the same disconcerting mixture of tenderness and hard-boiled detachment in the treatment of human nature. Although Korda is not so original a director as Clair, he was in many ways a better choice for this picture, in which a sustained warmth and softness, both in the direction and the photography, are qualities more appropriate than the frequent brittleness of Clair. Within the limits of its genre (for the play may be related to the belated "local color" movement on the French stage) "Marius" is something of a triumph for the current French cinema. It encourages the hope that we will soon have a purely French tradition of the screen, corresponding to the German, Russian, and American traditions, and coming as surely out of something deep and permanent in the national character.

Despite the Paris setting and the *boulevardier* charms of Maurice Chevalier, the picture at the Rivoli fails to suggest anything but the very worst tradition of maudlin American sentimentality. M. Chevalier tries hard to be amusing as the young man who finds a baby in his automobile and marries the beautiful young American whom he hires to take care of it. But there are limits even to M. Chevalier's powers of nonchalance. Undoubtedly the picture will make a great appeal in the provinces, and may even serve a purpose in reestablishing this sometimes naughty favorite in the hearts of mothers throughout the land.

"The Return of Nathan Becker," at the Europa, is another Russian propaganda film, this time in Yiddish, since its obvious intention is to inform Jews all over the world of the opportunities offered the race in the Soviet Republic. It will be enjoyed, therefore, chiefly by those to whom anything bearing on Russia at present is of significant interest. To others it will merely seem a very crude parable about an American Jew who returns to his native village, discovers that he can lay bricks better than the untrained workmen engaged at Magnitogorsk, and learns that in Russia things must be done more rapidly than in America if not in so "individualistic" a manner. The climactic scene is a bricklaying contest in which poor Becker is beaten by a comrade who applies the mortar not with a trowel but with a scoop. From beginning to end the picture may be responded to as something either very important or grotesquely funny—according to one's point of view.

WILLIAM TROY

# Drama

## Maugham at His Best

FEW if any contemporary writers have more sheer talent than Somerset Maugham. Sometimes, of course, he is content to depend upon that talent alone, and merely to run his scales with a disdainful virtuosity. Perhaps, indeed, most of his plays—as distinguished from some of his novels—have been little more than such scornful exercises in a superb technique; but "For Services Rendered" (Booth Theater) is, for once, a good deal more than that.

The virtuosity, to be sure, is no less evident than it always is. Maugham exhibits, for example, an almost uncanny skill in conceiving somewhat melodramatic situations which develop naturally into climaxes just at the moment when they are needed to punctuate the orderly development of an idea, and he never allows himself to forget for an instant any of the requirements for a well-made play. But this tale of an English family and of what the slowly developing consequences of the war did to its souls and its bodies has, in addition, a substance and a sincerity conspicuously lacking in the same author's showy arrangements of life east of Suez or adultery as it is practiced among Our Betters.

It is not, to be sure, a pleasant story. The blind son, the love-starved spinster, and the runaway daughter are not cheering to contemplate. Nor are they made more so by contrast with the serenity of a beefy father who is sure both that they all have much to be thankful for and that Old England at least is still sound at the core. But this spectacle, which might be merely depressing under a different treatment, is made to yield a real exhilaration by virtue of two qualities. In the first place, both the situations and the characters are somehow recognizably typical without being in the slightest degree stereotyped or hackneyed, and that fact is responsible for a kind of intellectual pleasure so rare that one almost forgets what it is like until a play as good as this reminds one that freshness of vision is still possible. In the second place, the emotions are so thrillingly discharged by the cold articulateness of Maugham's cynicism that one is aware less of those painful emotions themselves than of the relief which comes when they are commented upon with such restrained but adequate bitterness. No examples torn from their context can possibly suggest the effect, but two instances may be given to suggest ever so faintly the powerful underemphasis of his dialogue. One is the remark of the blind son who is explaining to his mother that he will manage to make someone sorry enough for his fate to secure his comfort even after she is dead: "They say that suffering ennobles. It hasn't ennobled me. It has made me cunning." The other is a subdued interchange between the same two when they have learned that the youngest daughter is about to elope with a middle-aged philanderer whom she does not love: "Aren't you afraid, mother, that she will come an awful cropper?" "No. She is hard, she is selfish, and she isn't stupid. I guess she can look after herself."

Powerful as the play is—and, indeed, I found it as impressive as anything seen in this season's theater—I doubt very seriously if it will achieve any tremendous success, for the simple reason that Mr. Maugham's fury is too cold and too aloof to

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GOODBYE AGAIN. Masque Theater. Fine performances by Osgood Perkins and others make this farce comedy very funny.

ONE SUNDAY AFTERNOON. Little Theater. Unpretentious comedy about a small town dentist. A surprise hit.

THE LATE CHRISTOPHER BEAN. Henry Miller Theater. Light comedy from the French completely rewritten by Sidney Howard and charmingly played by Pauline Lord and others. All things considered, it is much the most enjoyable comedy of the season.

appeal strongly to those who have escaped less completely than he has succeeded in doing from what he once called (after Spinoza) Human Bondage. A really popular writer must either love life or hate it, and Maugham has slowly disciplined himself to do neither. No longer even surprised at cruelty and meanness, he merely watches them at work, and his brilliance is the brilliance of a geometer. On the other hand, however, it must be set down that few plays have ever been better performed, and that the production of "For Services Rendered" might serve as a lesson to directors. So perfectly are all the excellent individual performances coordinated that it is ungracious to single out any of them, but if only two can be mentioned they had perhaps best be that of Fay Bainter, who is tremendously effective as the spinster, and that of Jane Wyatt in the role of the rebellious daughter. Several times this season Miss Wyatt has appeared to excellent advantage in short-lived productions, but she seems here to be developing an emotional power which may make her a really distinguished ingenue.

It so happens that the Maugham play was followed immediately by "The Three-Penny Opera" (Empire Theater) and the conjunction made me wonder as I came away from that quite transmogrified version of "The Beggar's Opera" whether any previous age had ever reviled itself as bitterly as ours has, whether there was ever before in the history of civilization a time when so large a portion of the intelligent and talented men poured such scorn upon themselves, upon their times, and upon man himself. I shall have to return next week to a more extended consideration of this, to me, brilliant work; here I can say only that I cannot but feel that the majority of the reviewers who gave it a tepid reception missed the point of its deliberate dissonances. Certainly it is not in competition with the ordinary operetta. I should, moreover, hesitate to say that it is exactly wholesome. But I was greatly touched by its morbid and mordant humor.

Those who seek simpler pleasures may be directed to "The Mikado" (St. James Theater), which is the first of Mr. Aborn's promised season of Gilbert and Sullivan revivals. It is a fine, solid, and much more than usually well-sung production of the old stand-by, received with boundless enthusiasm by the first-night audience. William Danforth, with a lifetime of experience, does the title role to perfection, and I doubt if anyone ever got more out of "My Object All Sublime."

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

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